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# Nick Carter Stories

## THE HOUSE OF FEAR

### OR Nick Carter's Counter Stroke

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# NICK CARTER STORIES

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# THE HOUSE OF FEAR;

## Or, NICK CARTER'S COUNTERSTROKE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

### CHAPTER I.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

"I say, shir! Can you let me have a match?"

"I think so."

The last speaker was Nick Carter, the famous detective.

The first was an erect, well-built, fashionably clad man, apparently in the forties and somewhat the worse for liquor. His crush hat had a rakish cant. His Inverness hung awry over his shoulders. His cravat had a disorderly twist, and his brown, Vandyke beard had lost its carefully combed appearance.

Nick Carter sized him up as a society man who had been on the bat, and who was returning home on foot to walk off the effects of it. His appearance and the hour seemed to warrant this conclusion, for it was two o'clock in the morning.

Nick was rather roughly clad. His strong, clean-cut face was so artistically treated with grease paint as to effectively disguise him and give him a decidedly sinister aspect. He had spent most of the night in searching for a crook, on whom he very much wanted to lay his hands, but his efforts had been futile, and he was returning to his residence in Madison Avenue.

He had turned a corner of Fifth Avenue only a few moments before, when he saw the stranger approaching, walking a bit unsteadily, and then the only person to be seen in the fashionable street.

Nick saw him fishing out a cigar and vainly searching in his pockets for a match, and he was not surprised when the man stopped him with the above request, straightening up with a manifest effort and trying to speak distinctly.

"Much obliged, sir," said he, when Nick reached into his pocket after his match box. "Will you smoke, I've got anozzer."

"No, none for me, thank you," said Nick. "I——"

"Don't thank me. Do what I tell you, instead, and do it quick. Hands up!"

The stranger had undergone a lightninglike change. He no longer appeared intoxicated. His every nerve and muscle seemed to have become as tense as a bowstring. His eyes were clear, aglow like balls of fire, and his voice had turned as hard as nails.

His right hand, with which he had pretended to reach into his pocket for another cigar, whipped out an automatic revolver, into the deadly muzzle of which the detective suddenly found himself gazing.

Nick Carter had been up against like situations before, and it did not disturb him.

"What are you really going to do with that toy?" he asked coolly, sharply scrutinizing the holdup man to fix his face in his mind.

"Hands up, or you'll never repeat that question," said the other, hissing the threatening words between his teeth. "Up with them, or you'll be a dead one."

His eyes had a gleam and glitter that no sane man would have ignored. They spelled murder in capital letters, and Nick obeyed and raised his hands as high as his shoulders.

"Now, back down those steps," commanded his assailant. "Keep going till I tell you to stop. Back under the steps. Hands up, mind you, or you'll be found dead there in the morning."

The steps referred to were those of a handsome brownstone residence occupied by a wealthy Wall Street banker and broker, Mr. Gideon Buckley. They led up from the sidewalk to the vestibule of the front door, while under them was a door leading into the basement hall of the house. This was accessible by descending two low steps and turning into the area under the main rise of steps, the entrance to which area was protected with an irongrille door, then wide open.

Nick obeyed his assailant—he had no sane alternative. He backed down the two low steps and into the gloomy area under the main flight, and the holdup man quickly closed the grille door and the spring lock clicked audibly, confining the detective under the rise of front steps.

The holdup man laughed—but not for an instant did his deadly weapon deviate from a direct line from the detective's breast. He still kept him constantly covered through the grille door, through which he gazed at him with gleaming eyes, as one might have viewed a lion in a steel cage.

The miscreant's laugh was utterly void of anything like mirth. It was as cold, exultant, and merciless as ever had fallen on the detective's ears. In a way, moreover, it struck him as being familiar, but he did not recall when and where he had heard it. He was not, however, left long in doubt of the outlaw's identity.

For the rascal's vicious laugh ended with a sharp, hissing whisper.

"You keep your voice down, now, or there'll be something drop," he threatened. "Speak above a whisper and I'll plug you on the instant."

"I'll take your word for it," Nick said quietly. "But you are not going to get fat from this job. If you lift all I have in my jeans, you'll not carry away much."

"Oh, I'm not after your coin," the holdup man retorted, with bitter asperity. "I've not run you in here to lift anything. I've got you where I want you, at last, and you're going to hear my little verse. I'll finish you later."

"Why finish me?" Nick coolly inquired. "What have I done that you want to finish me?"

"You've done me, blast you," was the reply, with suppressed ferocity. "You twice have crossed my path and turned me down. You have sent me from bad to worse and made me what I am. I know you, Carter, hang you, in spite of your disguise. I have been watching for you, lying in wait for you, and I've got you where I want you."

"Which seems to please you mightily," Nick said dryly, trying vainly to recall the rascal's identity. "When did I——"

"Oh, I'll tell you when," interrupted the other, with unabated bitterness. "You'll know when, Carter, when you see my face. I'll reveal it to you. I want you to see it, that I may laugh at you, mock you, and tell you face to face how deeply I hate you. Sooner or later, too, I'll hand you yours and send you to the devil.

"But not to-night—no, not to-night!" he went on, when Nick viewed him in silence. "I want you to anticipate it, to live in fear of it, to be racked mind and nerves until my bullet finds you. I'll send it into you sooner or later, Carter, as sure as my name is—Gaston Goulard."

He removed his Vandyke beard while speaking, thrusting it into his pocket, and Nick Carter was given an almost incredible surprise.

"Gaston Goulard!" he exclaimed involuntarily. "The dead alive!"

Nick recognized him now. There was no mistaking his hard-featured, white face, its sinister scowl, its expressive cruelty. To have seen a ghost, however, would not have been more amazing.

For Nick last had seen this man less than a month before, when cornered with the notorious Badger gang of crooks in an old lime loft leased by one of their number, to which the detective's assistants had traced Nick and the criminals—Nick last had seen him plunge bodily through one of the windows and disappear into the swirling waters of the East River.

Though a sharp watch had been kept by Patsy Garvan, moreover, who also had seen the rascal sink from view, Goulard did not reappear on the surface, and there had seemed to be no reasonable doubt that the knave had drowned.

Naturally, therefore, Nick was more than surprised upon seeing his sinister, malevolent face again; nor was it strange that, supposing him dead, he had not penetrated his exceedingly clever disguise, or recognized his evil voice.

It fell again upon the detective's ears, echoing his last impulsive remark.

"The dead alive—yes!" Goulard hissed triumphantly. "I fooled you, balked you, eluded you, Carter, and I finally will send you to the devil, where you supposed you had sent me. But the devil serves his own at times, and that was one of them. He gave me a new lease of life—that I might finally take yours. But not to-night, Carter, not to-night!"

"That's very considerate, Goulard, I'm sure," Nick coldly retorted. "Watch out that I don't put the boot on the other leg and place you where you belong."

"Bah!" Goulard ejaculated, under his breath. "You have no chance of that, not even a look in. You know not where to find me, yet for the past month I have been under your very eyes. I can put my finger on you, too, any hour of the day, Carter—and I shall always have a bullet in reserve for you."

Nick Carter ignored the miscreant's repeated threats, though he knew him to be capable of executing even the worst of them. Watching vainly, too, for a chance to turn the tables on the scamp, for Goulard was not to be caught napping, Nick coldly inquired:

"How did you accomplish it, Goulard? How did you escape from the East River?"

"I told you the devil serves his own at times," Goulard proceeded to explain, though Nick had hardly expected him to do so. "I rose to the surface, but not in view of your lynx eyes, Carter, nor those of your assistants."

"I already know that," said Nick.

"The swirl of the stream sucked me down—down—down!" Goulard went on fiercely. "I thought I would never rise. I thought of you, too, and even with death staring me in the face I regretted only that I had not lingered to kill you. I was carried down near the river wall. I was beaten on rocks and battered against bowlders. It was awful! I thought I would never rise—but I did! I came to the surface under a boatman's float thirty yards from the lime shed."

"Ah, I see," said Nick, unruffled by the other's bitterness. "That's how the devil served you, is it? You remained under the float till dark, I take it."

"Until after dark," corrected Goulard. "I clung to its timbers, cursing you all the while, and I then contrived to climb the river wall and steal away unseen. But you see me now, Carter, and soon shall feel the sting of my revenge. I wanted you to know it—that I am alive and out for vengeance. That alone impelled me to hold you up to-night."

"Cease your threats," Nick commanded. "They have

no weight with me. Having held me up and locked me in this place, Goulard, what do you intend doing?"

"I will leave you here," Goulard replied, with an uglier scowl on his white face. "I'll not take the risk of a shot at this time. It's too long a chance. I will leave you here with my threats ringing in your ears. You shall have time to think of them, to anticipate the end, to dread the day when I will make good. You shall live in a house of fear from this hour, Carter, in constant fear."

"The future will determine that, Goulard, and whether you were really lucky in not meeting your fate in the East River," Nick coolly answered. "If you have no more to say and do, you cannot depart too quickly. Get out, you rat, the sooner the better."

Goulard laughed again and pushed his revolver farther through the grille door.

"I'd love to, Carter!" he cried, under his breath. "I'd love to press the trigger and perforate your cursed skin with a bullet. But the risk is too great. I might be heard, intercepted in my flight, and perhaps railroaded to the chair. There will be a safer time and place. I will wait for it, watch for it, and there then will be no hesitation. I will kill you, Carter, for what you have done to me. As sure as God hears me—I will kill you."

"God may intervene and——"

"Remember!"

The fierce, malevolent face, pressed for a last moment to the grille door, vanished instantly, and the vengeful knave was gone.

Nick Carter heard his swiftly receding steps on the pavements. It was the only sound that broke the night silence in that locality. It died away so quickly, too, that it had seemed hardly perceptible.

Nick seized the grille door and tried to open it—tried vainly.

It withstood his utmost efforts.

## CHAPTER II.

### PARTNERS IN CRIME.

Nick Carter was not disturbed in the least degree by the threats of Gaston Goulard. He had been threatened too frequently by crooks to pay any attention to their sinister predictions.

They had no weight with the detective, therefore, those of this whilom merchant who had wrecked the big department store in which he had been a partner, and who then had gone deeper into the criminal mire, mingling with crooks and gangsters, resulting in a murder for which he now was wanted by the police, whom he had eluded less than a month before in the manner described.

Aside from his surprise at beholding Goulard alive, the entire incident would have had no great weight with Nick Carter, in fact, except for one reason—the extraordinary episodes that immediately followed.

These alone, with their far-reaching results and because they exhibited from the first the remarkable discernment and versatility of the celebrated detective, made this night a noteworthy one in the record of his professional work.

Finding that immediate escape from under the stone steps was impossible, and that he could not at once pursue Goulard, Nick proceeded more deliberately to seek means to liberate himself. He knew that he could not have been overheard by any person in the house, having spoken only in whispers, while hardly a sound had been made that would have been audible ten feet away.

"The rascal must have been watching me, as he said, and contrived to intercept me in front of this house, probably having learned that this grille door was open, also that it could be quickly and securely locked. Securely locked, by Jove, is right!"

Nick had taken out his electric searchlight and was inspecting the grille door. He found that it had a strong Yale lock, to pick which was out of the question. It looked, in fact, as if it would be utterly impossible to open the door without a key.

"By gracious, I don't half like this," thought Nick, pausing to consider the situation. "There is no getting out unaided by the way I entered. I can bang on this other door, of course, and raise some one in the house, who could come down and liberate me. That would necessitate a truthful explanation, however, and the story might leak out.

"It would be embarrassing, at least, to read in all of the newspapers that the famous New York detective was caught and cornered in such a hole as this by a midnight marauder. The sensational journals would feature it with red letters, for fair, and make the most of it. I don't think I could stand for that.

"Instead of raising any one, therefore, I'll try to quietly open this other door, which evidently leads into a basement hall. If I can enter unheard, I then can steal up to the main hall and out through the front door. None will then be the wiser, as far as I am concerned, and Goulard will not be fool enough to expose me. He will foresee, of course, that I shall keep my mouth closed. Let the crafty rascal alone to feel sure of that."

Having decided that to be the easiest way out of his dilemma, Nick turned his attention to the door leading to the basement hall. He found it had only an ordinary lock, and that the key had been removed.

"Well, well, this will be soft walking," he said to himself. "I can open it with a picklock in two shakes of a lamb's tail. In a minute more, that done, I can slip out of the house unheard."

Fishing out a ring of keys on which he had the practical little implement mentioned, Nick quietly inserted it into the lock, and a moment later he noiselessly shot the bolt and opened the door.

Then began the series of sensational episodes that made his work of that night so noteworthy.

Nick stepped into the basement hall, then quietly closed the door, locking it with a key found hanging on a nail near the casing, and which he discovered by means of his searchlight.

He then paused and listened vainly for any sound from the floors above. Obviously, no one in the house had yet been disturbed.

"The way is open, all right, so here goes," he said to himself, after a moment.

A flash from his searchlight revealed the stairway leading to the main hall.

Nick tiptoed toward it and began the ascent.

The top of the stairway ended near the middle of the main hall, and under the rise of stairs leading up to the next floor.

Nick arrived at the top stair, holding his breath, tread-

ing as if on eggs, and feeling his way by means of the wall on one side and the baluster rail on the other.

Despite his exceeding care, however, the top stair creaked slightly under his weight.

The noise, though hardly perceptible under ordinary conditions, fell audibly on the surrounding stillness.

It was instantly followed by another, hardly more perceptible, but sufficient to make the detective doubly alert.

The sound came from a room across the hall, the door of which was open.

Nick waited, lest the stair might creak again if he stirred. Bending nearer the baluster rail, nevertheless, he could see through the open door of the opposite room.

It was the library of the handsomely furnished house.

With the exception of one part of the room, all was invisible, shrouded in inky darkness.

The exception was a circle of light shed upon an open desk—faintly revealing a figure crouching in front of it.

It appeared to be that of a man engaged in robbing the desk, or quietly forcing the interior drawers in search of something.

Nick waited and watched.

"By Jove, here's a curious coincidence," he said to himself. "Have I stolen in here just in time to catch a crook? Apparently, however, I'm in his class. He may, on the other hand, be some one who lives in the house and who has some motive for stealthily searching that desk. No, by gracious, that's not probable. He certainly is a crook."

The figure crouching at the desk had turned slightly and gazed toward the hall, as if under the impulse of sudden uneasiness, or that subtle sense which at times impresses one of the presence of another.

Nick then saw that the lower part of the man's face was covered with a black cloth—convincing him that he was a thief from outside, rather than a resident of the house.

He turned, after listening for a moment, and resumed his knavish work.

Nick Carter's first impulse was to arrest the thief then and there—but he did not do so.

Another and better move, in view of the greater possibilities it presented, quickly occurred to him.

"By Jove, this may be the opportunity of a lifetime," he said to himself. "It's odds that the rascal is not alone, that he has one confederate, at least, who may be watching outside, probably in the rear of the house. I can fool this scamp and gather in both of them, I think, or even round up a bigger gang with which they may be identified. That surely would discount taking in only this fellow. I'm blessed if I don't try it."

Nick had recalled his sinister make-up, also that he had several changes of disguise in his pocket. He deftly adjusted one over his already hangdog type of countenance, then glided quickly under the rise of stairs mentioned, crouching low against the baseboard in one corner.

The top of the basement stairs creaked again when he left them, precisely as he had anticipated.

The effect, moreover, was exactly what he was expecting.

The figure at the library desk started up as if electrified by the faint sound.

The circle of light from the flash lamp vanished instantly, leaving the room and hall in impenetrable gloom.

"He heard it," thought Nick, holding his breath. "He's waiting and listening. He fears that some one is here, but he is not sure."

The waiting detective was right. He presently could hear the stealthy, catlike tread of the crook approaching the near door. It ceased after a moment, and Nick knew that the rascal then had reached the threshold and again was listening intently.

Nearly a minute passed, one minute of absolute silence and inky darkness.

Then a swift beam of light shot through the hall—but not under the stairs.

It was gone as quickly as it came, only to be repeated a moment later, leaping swiftly the entire length of the broad hall.

The crook saw no one, and he then stepped noiselessly toward the main stairway, where he paused once more to listen.

It was the move the detective had expected, and for which he was waiting. Rising noiselessly, Nick quickly glided nearer, then suddenly clasped the motionless black figure in his arms.

A thrill of amazement went through him from head to foot.

The form he had clasped, confining both arms and preventing the use of a weapon—was that of a woman.

Amazement, however, did not cause Nick Carter to lose his head. He held fast to the supple, writhing figure of the unknown female, who wriggled vainly to free herself and reach for her revolver, while the detective quickly whispered, in tones well calculated to dispel her fears:

"Whist! Keep quiet! I wa'n't wise to your being a skirt. What's your game here?"

Nick's quietude also was assuring. The woman ceased struggling, but turned sufficiently to gaze at his face, as well as it could be seen in the faint light that came through the pebbled-glass panes of the front door.

Nick now could see the sharp glint of her eyes and the outline of her brow and cheeks above the bandage of black cloth that covered her mouth and chin.

"What's your own game?" she questioned quickly, under her breath. "What sent you here?"

"I'm on the lift and——"

"You're not a dick?"

"Dick be hanged! I saw the iron door under the front steps was open, so I picked the lock of the other to see what I could nail," Nick explained. "I piped you in yonder at the desk when I crept up the stairs. But I did not dream you was a skirt."

"Let me go, will you?"

"Sure—if you'll keep your yap closed."

"Trust me for that."

"I'm not here to be nailed by a bull," Nick added.

"You can gamble that I'm not," muttered the woman. "Say, step in there with me. We ought to know each other better."

"That hits me all right—but walk on your toes."

Nick had released her, when requested, but the woman clung to him for a second, as if fain to express her relief with a momentary display of affection. Together they stole into the library, and she noiselessly closed the door.

"You're not a dick, then," she remarked, in whispers. "Say, that's some load off my mind. I thought sure I was a goner."

"Dick nothing!" Nick muttered derisively. "Have a peek. Do I look like a dick?"

He fished out his searchlight while speaking, throwing the beam upon himself. He then removed the disguise he had put on a few moments before, and displayed the sinister, make-up face beneath it.

It was a ruse that would have deceived the most suspicious of mortals. None would have supposed for a moment that he was there in double disguise—this man who now was pretending to be no less a crook than the woman herself.

She laughed softly and clasped his arm with both hands.

"Say, you're all right, pal," she whispered. "Flash it on me. I'll go as far as you have gone, since you sure seem on the level. Have a look at my mug."

She drew down the black cloth from her face, on which Nick flashed the beam of light, giving him still another surprise.

"Great guns!" he mentally exclaimed. "Sadie Badger, the queen of the old Badger gang."

Nick knew both her and the gang, all of whom had figured in the recent murder case against Gaston Goulard, and all of whom had been sentenced to prison, with the exception of Goulard himself, who was supposed to have been drowned, and this one woman against whom sufficient evidence to connect her with the murder, or show complicity after the crime, could not be found. She had been liberated, therefore, after the trial and conviction of the rest of the notorious gang, and she had not since been seen in her customary haunts.

Nick Carter's surprise was the greater for that reason, when he now beheld her in the very act of robbing the house outside of which he had so unexpectedly encountered Goulard. That they were not confederates in this robbery was obvious to him, however, for he at once reasoned that Goulard would not have put the woman in danger of arrest, if he had known that she was in the house.

Nick now saw, too, that Sadie Badger was clad in a tight-fitting black jersey, under a loose dark coat, and that she wore knickerbocker trousers, black stockings, and rubber-soled shoes, all combining to give her the appearance of a youth under twenty, who might have walked the streets at almost any hour of the day or night without a challenge from the police.

Nick was quick to appreciate all that this signified, and to take advantage of the situation he had in part framed up, though his sinister face reflected none of his true sentiments and designs.

"You're all right, kid, if looks count for anything," he said quietly. "We meet by chance, a dead queer chance, but there might be something in it for both. What's your name?"

"What's yours?" questioned Sadie circumspectly.

"Bosey Magee," Nick promptly informed her.

"Bosey?"

"That's short for Ambrose," whispered Nick. "That's my moniker. I hang out in Boston most of the time, but I blew in here last night and went broke in the stuss joints."

"I get you, pal."

"I held up a bloke an hour back and lifted a small wad. It was not enough, when I saw that the front-basement door of this crib was easy to get at. You can find out all about me from Jack Gleason, who runs the Orient House in Richmond Street, where I hail from," Nick added. "He'll tell you Bosey Magee wouldn't crab a game or squeal on a pal. That's me, kid."

"And it listens good to me, all right," said Sadie, in approving whispers. "I'll meet you on even ground. My name is Sadie Badger, and I'm out for the coin as you see me, or in any old way I can get it."

"That's the right sort, Sadie, and you're in my class. But you're not cracking this crib alone, are you?" questioned Nick.

"That's what, Bosey."

"Where are your pals?"

"I'm leary of pals just now," said Sadie. "I was in with a good bunch and in right, but an infernal dick got them a month back and sent them up the river."

"Tough luck," said Nick

"I ducked the same dose by the skin of my teeth," added Sadie. "I have got no pals I would bank on now, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"I say, Bosey!" The woman's low whispers took on a more sibilant eagerness. "Since you're here after plunder, and fate has chucked us together, let's run in double harness on this job. What d'ye say? Are you game? Will you be my partner in crime?"

Nick Carter did not hesitate for the hundredth part of a second. He saw more to be gained than by arresting Sadie Badger then and there. He grasped her extended hand, replying quickly:

"Will a duck swim? I'd be a fool, Sadie, if I wouldn't take a chance with you. Partners in crime—that's what!"

## CHAPTER III.

### THE HOUSE OF FEAR.

"But what's your game? What's the big idea, Nick? What more do you expect to gain than you would have derived from arresting Sadie Badger and sending her up for a prison sentence?"

Nick Carter was at breakfast with his two chief assistants, Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan, on the morning following his encounter with Gaston Goulard and the whilom queen of the notorious Badger gang. He had related his experiences of the previous night, and informed them of his extraordinary compact with Sadie Badger.

"Much!" he tersely replied. "My bargain with her, Chick, was entirely warrantable. In dealing with crooks, one must fight them with their own weapons, craft, deception, and treachery, when necessary."

"I admit that, Nick, of course."

"What good to have arrested her alone, if more can be accomplished?" Nick added. "It would have amounted to comparatively little. I would merely have put one dangerous female crook out of the running. I felt my way carefully, mind you, and I very soon found that she could not steal much from the Buckley residence."

"That of Gideon Buckley, the banker, you say?"

"Yes. She had entered through a rear basement window. She is expert in that game. She had learned from one of his clerks, whom he has artfully insnared with her wiles, that the banker took home a quantity of bonds

and securities yesterday afternoon, and that he has no safe in his residence. She reasoned that he would put them in his library desk for the night, and she went there to get them."

"But failed to find them?"

"Failed completely," said Nick. "Buckley may have taken them to his bedroom, or concealed them in some other part of the house. We could not find them, at all events, and we got away with only a quantity of solid silver from the dining-room table and sideboard. I would have protected his bonds and securities, all right, providing that we had stolen them, but I had other fish to fry in connection with doing so."

Patsy Garvan fell to laughing, and not for the first time during Nick's recital.

"Gee! this certainly beats me, chief," he declared. "You in criminal partnership with Sadie Badger! That sure is going some. What came off after you left the house?"

"We got out by the way she had entered," Nick replied. "I then went with her to the door of a house in Lexington Avenue, where, she told me, she had occupied the ground-floor flat for nearly a month."

"Alone?"

"She said so, Patsy, and I take it for what I think it was worth," said Nick. "I declined an invitation to enter, but I promised to call within a day or two and plan another job with her. I will have learned more about her and her recent doings by that time."

"But what's your game, Nick?" Chick repeated. "What do you expect to gain by it?"

"For one thing, Chick, I expect to get Gaston Goulard—before he can contrive to get me," Nick replied, more seriously. "That rat meant what he said last night. I could read it in his evil eyes and detect it in his voice. He would have shot me in cold blood through that grille door, if fear of detection and capture had not restrained him."

"He certainly is capable of it, Nick, as far as that goes," Chick readily allowed. "We want him badly enough for the murder of Batty Lang, but I don't see just how your bargain with Sadie Badger will enable you to get him."

"It will help," Nick said confidently. "Crooks flock together as naturally as blackbirds. Both Goulard and Sadie Badger, despite that she said last night that she now has no pal on whom she would bank, are in touch with the worst elements of the New York underworld. Through her and the subterfuge I have adopted, I intend to locate some of them, at least, and discover the whereabouts of Gaston Goulard."

"Ah, I see."

"It is not easy for either of us to worm our way into the confidence of a crook, particularly if he is an old-timer," Nick added. "We and our tricks are too well known. They fight shy of us. This was too good an opportunity to lose, therefore, and I resolved to take advantage of it."

"That's the stuff, chief," said Patsy. "It's bound to cut ice of some thickness."

"I think so, Patsy, and that it will enable me to finally run down Goulard," said Nick, rising to go to his business office. "I will call on Sadie Badger either to-night or to-morrow, disguised as I was last night, and find out just how the land lies. I can take her in at will, you know, as far as that goes."

"Like breaking sticks," said Patsy. "You're in right, chief, to pull off a big stunt of some kind. My money goes on that."

Nick Carter dropped the matter temporarily. Only, emergency cases ever interfered with the regular routine of his business, and it was not in his nature to figure blindly on what could be accomplished through the relations he had established with Sadie Badger.

Later in the morning, nevertheless, Nick sent Patsy Garvan to learn what he could on the quiet concerning the woman during her residence in the flat she then occupied.

Nick lunched with a friend in the Waldorf that day. He departed alone about half past one, and had just turned the corner of Fifth Avenue when an approaching limousine swerved to the curbing and its occupant called him by name.

"Get in Nick, please, and go with me," he added, opening the door when the detective approached. "Don't say you're too busy. Your're the one man I most wanted to see."

Nick stepped into the costly car before the last was said.

"Home, Greeley. Let her go lively."

These directions were to his chauffeur, and the speaker was Frank Mantell, son of the senior partner of the late firm of Mantell & Goulard, whose big department store had been wrecked months before by the robberies of Goulard himself.

Nick at once recalled his encounter with him the previous night, and he instinctively felt that the matter on Mantell's mind, for he obviously was carrying a heavy burden, might indirectly relate to it. It was for that reason that he immediately complied with the young man's request.

"What's the trouble, Frank?" he inquired, as the limousine sped up the avenue. "You look a bit white and drawn."

"Drawn through a knothole, Nick, is about how I feel," Mantell replied, placing his hand on that of the detective.

"Are you ill?"

"No. Only worried."

"About what?"

"My wife."

"Your wife?" Nick echoed inquiringly. "You don't mean——"

"No, no; there's nothing wrong on her part, Nick," put in Mantell quickly. "She is all that a man could wish. But we're living in a house of fear, Nick, a house of fear. The dread that hangs over us is something appalling. I have had in mind to appeal to you for more than a week, but I know you to be so busy that——"

"One moment," Nick interposed, noting the exceeding nervousness with which his companion was speaking. "What is the cause of your terrible fear? What is it that you dread? Is your wife threatened in any way, or——?"

"That's it!" Mantell cut in quickly. "That hits the nail on the head. She is threatened in a way that is breaking her down mentally and bodily; both of us, in fact. Our lives are becoming a ceaseless shudder, a nightmare from which——"

"Stop right there, Frank," Nick commanded, with some austerity. "I'll listen to no more talk of that kind. Come

to the point at once and state the bare facts, or I'll order your chauffeur to drop me on the next corner."

"You're right, Nick," Mantell quickly admitted. "I think I have hypnotized myself with horrible dread. I cannot govern my own mind, or——"

"There you go again," Nick interrupted. "Now, Mantell, unless——"

"Wait! I'll tell you."

"Do so, then."

"It began three weeks ago, Nick, with a placard pinned on the side door of our residence," Mantell said, more calmly. "It was a rudely scrawled threat on a scrap of brown paper. It bore no signature and contained only these words: Your money or your wife!"

"Wife, eh?" queried Nick. "Are you sure you did not misread it? Was not the word life, instead of wife?"

"No, indeed, as since has appeared," Mantell said quickly. "Naturally, of course, that first threatening placard did not alarm us. I thought it might be a joke, a very bad one, of course, or the work of some foolish or malicious persons bent only upon annoying us. Two days later, however, a second was tacked on the trunk of a tree directly opposite the windows of my wife's sleeping room."

"A similar treat?"

"Yes. It read: 'You've got my money. I'm going to get your wife.'"

"H'm, I see!" Nick remarked. "Was it on paper like the other?"

"Yes. It was a piece of ordinary manila paper, such as one might obtain in a grocery store."

"Inscribed with a lead pencil?"

"Yes. The letters were rudely printed, however, not written."

"That was done to avoid exposing his handwriting."

"I inferred so," said Mantell. "That second placard made us somewhat apprehensive. I feared that my wife was to be persecuted by some unknown scoundrel whose enmity one of us has incurred, or who is himself a lunatic. I know of no one whose money I have got, however, or who is justified in any antipathy for me, or my wife. Helen began to grow nervous and——"

"One moment," Nick interrupted. "I can appreciate your apprehensions and the nervousness and fear of your wife. What steps did you take in the matter?"

"None at that time, Nick, except to caution Helen to be on her guard, and not to venture out alone after dark," Mantell replied. "I hoped the matter would end there, with no repetition of the outrage."

"Well, what followed?"

"Nothing more for about three days," Mantell continued. "Helen ventured, just after dusk that evening, to go to our rear gate with a friend who was leaving for home, that being the nearest way. They parted at the gate, and Helen started to return to the house. As she was passing the garage, a man darted from behind it and pursued her. She uttered a scream and ran at the top of her speed toward the house."

"Did he overtake her?"

"No. Luckily, Nick, I entered the driveway gate with my touring car at that moment, and in the glare of the lamps I saw the couple. The man immediately turned and fled. He disappeared in the darkness of the back street, but I heard him shout that he would get her later, in spite of me. Helen had fainted dead away on the side veranda, and I ran to her assistance, of course, making no attempt to pursue the miscreant."

"He appears to really mean business," Nick observed. "Did your wife recognize him?"

"No. She had only a glimpse at his face. She is sure that he wore a beard, however, and was a dark man, of medium build. She was too frightened to note anything more."

"The beard may have been a disguise."

"Quite likely."

"What steps did you then take to protect her?"

"I employed two private watchmen to stealthily keep an eye on my estate, hoping to discover and arrest the miscreant. On the very next day, Nick, a threatening letter came in the mail, addressed to my wife. It was on cheap, plain paper, and printed with a lead pencil, as were the placards mentioned."

"Obviously, then, from the same person," said Nick. "What did the letter contain?"

"I have it in my pocket."

"Ah. Let me see it."

Mantell hastened to comply, and Nick read the following, rudely printed on a single sheet of paper:

"Those two watchmen will not protect you. I'm going to get you, in spite of them, in spite of your husband, in spite of all the forces with which you can oppose me. I want you—and I'm going to get you."

Nick Carter's brows knit a little closer while he read this cowardly, threatening communication. Instead of returning it to his companion, he replaced the sheet in the typewritten envelope and slipped it into his pocket.

"I'll keep it for the present, Mantell," he said simply. "Tell me, now, what more has occurred and what you have done about it."

"A few evenings later, Nick, or about a week ago, when Helen was partly disrobed for bed, she thought she heard a stealthy step outside of one of her windows. She stole into the next room and looked out."

"And discovered?"

"A man crouching on the veranda floor. He saw the face draperies move when Helen parted them, and then heard the scream she tried in vain to suppress. He turned like a flash and leaped to the ground, then vanished in the gloom under the near trees. We found my wife in a faint on the floor. She was not mistaken, Nick, for the tracks of the miscreant were on the roof and in the driveway."

"Were the two watchmen then in your employ?"

"Yes."

"They did not see the intruder?"

"No. The cowardly cur is as elusive as a shadow. Helen is becoming a nervous wreck, while I——"

"I will talk with her," Nick interposed. "I also will look into the matter. I suppose, Mantell, that you have no suspicion as to the identity of the rascal."

"Not the slightest, Nick."

"Your wife is a very beautiful woman," added the detective. "There was one man who aspired to her love, as I remember, and who had a very deep hatred for you and your father after the wrecking of your big department store and——"

"You mean Gaston Goulard, of course," Mantell cut in.

"Yes."

"But he is dead. If he were alive—well, he is the mis-

creant whom I at once would suspect. But the East River does not give up its dead. We know that Goulard was drowned."

Nick did not say what he knew about him, nor of what his suspicions consisted. He saw that they already were entering the spacious grounds in which Mantell's residence was situated, overlooking the Riverside Drive and the broad, glistening waters of the Hudson.

"I suppose your father is downtown at this hour," he remarked, as the car sped up the driveway.

"Yes. I dropped him at the surrogate court half an hour ago. Some of our business affairs are still unsettled. My wife and mother are here, however, though the latter is an invalid and confined to her room. To the side door, Greeley."

The chauffeur bowed, and the limousine presently came to a stop under the massive porte-cochère protecting a side entrance to the imposing residence.

Perkins, the butler, appeared almost immediately at the door.

"Come in, Nick," Mantell said cordially, while they mounted the broad, marble steps. "We may find Helen in the library, or——"

"Beg pardon, sir," said Perkins respectfully. "Mrs. Mantell has gone out."

Mantell turned quickly.

"Gone out!" he echoed. "Gone out with whom?"

"With your father, sir."

"With my father—nonsense!"

"But, sir, I am very sure of it."

"Impossible! When did she leave? How long ago?"

Perkins glanced at a tall old clock in the hall.

"Precisely half an hour, sir," said he. "I noticed the time."

Mantell turned as pale as if suddenly death-stricken.

"Half an hour!" he gasped, with affrighted gaze meeting that of the detective. "That is impossible, utterly impossible. Half an hour ago, Nick, I was with my father in the surrogate court."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CONNECTING LINK.

Nick Carter already had come to two conclusions:

One, that the miscreant by whom Helen Mantell had been repeatedly threatened was none other than Gaston Goulard.

Another, that Gaston Goulard now had got in his iniquitous work.

Nick saw, too, that Frank Mantell was in a fair way to collapse under the alarming discovery, and he at once took steps to encourage him.

"You keep your head, Frank, and don't let blind fear unman you," he commanded a bit sharply. "There is nothing in getting rattled. I know a good deal more about this matter than you suppose, and there is much less to fear concerning the personal safety of your wife than you imagine. Pull yourself together, therefore, and meet the situation man fashion. Let me take the ribbons, while you do as I have directed. I'll speedily sift this to the bottom."

All this, together with the detective's strong personal influence, was not without effect. Mantell braced himself to meet the worst, saying quickly:

"You are right, Carter, perfectly right. I must keep a grip on myself, or I shall go completely off my perch. What do you mean by saying that you know more about this matter than I suppose?"

"I will presently tell you," said Nick. "Let's get down to bare facts, for a starter, and I then will decide what must be done."

"But what do you make of it? How could my father ——"

"Obviously, Frank, your father could not be in two places at once," Nick interrupted. "If you were with him in the surrogate court precisely half an hour ago, it could not have been he who called here for your wife."

"That goes without saying, Nick. But——"

"Wait! Let me learn the exact circumstances," Nick again interposed. "Come into the library. This way, Perkins."

He led the way while speaking, forcing Mantell to a chair and adding encouragingly:

"You keep quiet, now, while I question the butler. I'll very soon pick up the trail and get after the rascal."

"Go ahead, Nick," bowed Mantell, pressing his hand. "Thank God that I brought you out here."

"Now, Perkins, tell me what occurred," said Nick, turning to the tall, very much astonished butler. "You were very sure, you said, that the man who came here is the elder Mr. Mantell."

"Why, yes, I have no doubt of it, none whatever, sir," replied Perkins. "How could I be mistaken? I have served Mr. Mantell for five years, sir, and——"

"And know him perfectly well by sight," Nick cut in dryly. "That shows the exceeding skill and cleverness of the man who deceived you. He came in a conveyance of some kind, I infer."

"Yes, sir. He came in a taxicab."

"Tell me just what he said and did."

"He said very little, sir," Perkins proceeded to explain. "I saw the taxicab coming up the driveway, sir, and that Mr. Mantell was seated in it. He had directed the chauffeur to the side door, sir, and I hastened to open it, thinking Mr. Mantell would come into the house."

"He did not do so?" questioned Nick.

"No, sir. He spoke from the taxicab, sir, and told me to send Celeste, who is Mrs. Mantell's maid, to ask her mistress to put on her street garments to go with him to the court, where her signature was wanted on some papers relating to the business on which Mr. Mantell had left home this morning. I heard them discussing it while at breakfast, sir."

"What more did he say, Perkins?"

"He told me to have Celeste ask Mrs. Mantell to hasten, as young Mr. Mantell was to join them in court, and that they must not keep the judge waiting. That was all, sir."

"You gave Celeste those instructions."

"I did, sir, and Celeste took them to her mistress."

"What followed?"

"Mrs. Mantell hurried downstairs in about five minutes, sir," said Perkins. "She was putting on her veil, and I opened the door for her to pass out."

"Did you open the taxicab door for her?"

"No, sir. The chauffeur had opened it and returned to his seat."

"On which side of the interior seat was Mr. Mantell sitting, or the man you supposed was he?" Nick inquired.

"Near the open door, sir," said Perkins. "I heard him tell Mrs. Mantell that he would close it, and she passed him and took the other end of the seat. Mr. Mantell then closed the door, sir, and the chauffeur drove away."

"Rapidly, I infer."

"Yes, sir."

"You saw nothing more that occurred in the taxicab?"

"I did not, sir."

"Did Mrs. Mantell hesitate, or appear to shrink from entering it?"

"She did not, sir. She hurried to get in," said Perkins. "I noticed that in particular, sir."

"And that shows plainly enough, Mantell, that your wife was completely deceived, that she had no doubt that the man in the taxicab was your father, nor looked at him sharply enough before entering to detect the exceedingly clever impersonation that already had deceived the butler," said Nick. "What soon afterward occurred in the taxicab can only be conjectured. Send Celeste here, Perkins. I will hear what she can tell us."

The butler hastened to obey, and a slender, dark-eyed girl presently entered the library, whom Nick immediately began to question.

Celeste could tell him, however, only that she had given the butler's message to her mistress, that Mrs. Mantell had remarked that she must hasten, since her father-in-law had not entered the house, and that she immediately put on her hat and jacket, then hurried down to join him.

Nick saw plainly that the girl was telling the truth. He dismissed her after a few inquiries and directed her to close the door.

Frank Mantell had not interrupted him from the beginning. With jaws hard set, with every vestige of color gone from his cheeks, he had mutely listened to the hurried questions of the detective, all the while vainly searching Nick's face for an expression from which he might derive a ray of hope.

The black cloud of fear that had been hanging above this house had launched its thunderbolt, and the dreaded missile had found its mark.

"Well?"

Mantell's terse inquiry, hoarse with anxiety and suspense, brought Nick Carter out of his momentary abstraction. He looked up quickly and said:

"There's nothing to this, Mantell, in so far as the crime, the motive, and the identity of the criminal are concerned."

"You don't mean," Mantell cried, "that you know who has committed this outrage?"

"I certainly do."

"Tell me."

"Gaston Goulard."

Mantell stared, dumfounded for a moment.

"What do you say, Carter?" he demanded. "Are you mad? Goulard is dead——"

"No, he isn't," Nick interrupted. "He is very much alive. I saw him last night under circumstances that were entirely convincing."

"You saw Gaston Goulard?" Mantell appeared unable to believe his own ears. "You saw him alive and——"

"And very much in evidence," Nick cut in dryly. "Listen. I'll tell you about it."

"Good heavens! it seems utterly incredible," Mantell said more calmly, after Nick had described the encounter of the previous night, but not what had followed it. "That scoundrel escaped drowning, then, and now is out to persecute me again and——"

"That is not his chief motive," said Nick. "Take it from me, Mantell, he is out after money. I know he was on the rocks financially a month ago, when he pulled off the job that cost Connie Taggart his life, and so nearly sent him to the bottom of the East River."

"You suspect, then——"

"That he still is down and out, and that he has taken this method to force you into paying a big ransom for your wife's safe return. Note that I say safe return," Nick added. "Under no other condition could he reasonably hope to coerce you. That is why I assert, Mantell, that your wife is in no immediate personal peril."

"Do you really think so?"

"I feel absolutely sure of it," said Nick. "Many facts confirm my opinion of this case. Goulard is a cur who finds delight in threatening those upon whom he has designs. That appeared in the previous case, in the nerve and audacity with which he held me up, and in what has occurred here during the past month. Aside from getting back at me, however, whom he really would like to kill, Goulard is out only for money. You can bank safely on that, Mantell, and that your wife will not be harmed as long as the rascal sees any prospect of bleeding you out of a large sum."

"I hope you are right," Mantell declared, with a look of relief. "I will pay——"

"Nothing!" Nick cut in quickly. "You will leave this matter entirely to me. I'm going to get that rascal and rescue your wife, Mantell, within forty-eight hours."

"Do you really mean it?" Mantell's face lighted wondrously.

"Wait and see."

"But——"

"There is no alternative," Nick forcibly insisted. "You must keep perfectly quiet and leave me to do the work."

"I could not do better, Carter, of course."

"Goulard is the only man who thus could have impersonated your father," Nick added. "He is about the same build and is thoroughly familiar with his voice, bearing, and habits."

"That's true. They were in business together for years."

"Your father, moreover, with his gray hair, his beard, and his gold-bowed spectacles, presents a type easily impersonated. Goulard knew this, and has contrived to pick up other points bearing upon the business engagements of you and your father this morning, enabling him to turn this scurvy trick. That's all there is to it—except to track the rascal and round him up with his confederates."

"Does that look easy to you?" Mantell inquired, with the ghost of a smile on his pale face.

"That's neither here nor there," Nick replied. "I never view a task from that standpoint. I go at it for all I am worth, and the greater the difficulties, the more credit in overcoming them."

"That's true, too," Mantell quickly admitted.

"But I shall not accomplish it by sitting here and discussing the matter," Nick added, with some dryness. "I must get a move on and begin to get in my work."

"What are your plans?" questioned Mantell anxiously.

"Don't ask me. I haven't laid any."

"But let me help you, Nick. Is there nothing I can do?"

"Yes, one thing," said the detective, rising abruptly. "Take me downtown in your limousine and drop me about a block from my residence."

"Why not at your door?"

"Because my house may be under espionage," said Nick, a bit grimly. "There is no telling what steps Goulard may take to prevent the miscarriage of his designs. He is a crafty, as well as a daring dog. Do merely what I have requested, Mantell. Leave me to do the rest."

It was after two o'clock when Nick entered his residence, at once proceeding to his library, where he found Chick awaiting him, and whom he quickly informed of all that had transpired.

"But hasn't Patsy returned?" he then inquired.

"Not yet," said Chick.

"And you haven't heard of him?"

"Not a word."

"By Jove, that's strange, deucedly strange," Nick said, more seriously. "It ought not to have taken him till now, nor anything like it, to pick up the information I wanted. Something unexpected must have happened."

## CHAPTER V.

### PATSY GARVAN'S PROBLEM.

There were very good reasons why Patsy Garvan had not returned to report the result of his inquiries concerning Sadie Badger and her doings in the flat she had been occupying since the round-up of the Badger gang and the supposed drowning of Gaston Goulard.

Arriving in the locality soon after one o'clock, Patsy readily located the house at the door of which Nick had left his partner in crime close upon four o'clock that morning, and he at once began a brief inspection of it from the opposite side of the street.

It was the third house in a long brick block in a fairly desirable locality. All three of its flats evidently were occupied. The roller shades at the two windows of that on the ground floor were closely drawn, however, and there was no sign of life from within.

"She probably is making up lost sleep, if there," thought Patsy, after sauntering by the house and noticing its negative aspect. "There don't seem to be much doing for me, unless I can get next to some one who has become acquainted with her, or had enough interest in her to watch her. It won't do to risk asking questions of the other tenants, as they might put her wise. Sadie Badger wouldn't be slow to suspect that she might have slipped a cog. Let her alone for that. Gee! I'll take a chance with this fellow."

Patsy had arrived at the open door of a provision store on a corner not more than fifty yards from the opposite house. There was a display of vegetables in boxes outside. Seated on a barrel just within the door was a young man in a butcher's frock, whose round, ruddy face favorably impressed the detective. He was alone in the store, evidently a clerk, and he then was absorbed in a noon edition of a sensational newspaper.

As he stepped into the store, Patsy saw the headlines of the article the clerk was reading, and he paused near him and said agreeably:

"Reading about the robbery?"

It was that in which Nick Carter had taken part the previous night; and Patsy already had seen the article.

"Yes, I was," replied the clerk, looking up. "Have you read about it?"

"Sure."

"Kind of a curious job, wasn't it? The crook didn't get away with much."

"There may have been a reason."

"Most likely."

"I happen to know there was," added Patsy, smiling.

"You do?" questioned the clerk, with a look of surprise. "How does that happen?"

"You'll not give me away?"

"Not on your life, as sure as my name is Frank Steel."

"You look frank, all right, and your last name certainly rings true," laughed Patsy, displaying the badge under the lap of his vest. "That's how I know. I'm in the business."

"A detective?" Steel asked, with increasing interest.

"That's what," nodded Patsy. "I'm in the employ of the king-pin of all detectives."

"Not Nick Carter?"

"That calls the turn, Frank."

"Gracious!" Steel exclaimed, extending his hand. "I'm glad to know you. I wish I had your job."

"Ah, it's not a soft one," said Patsy significantly.

"I guess that's right," laughed the other. "I have always wanted to meet Nick Carter. I never happened to see him."

"I'll take you round to the office some day and introduce you," said Patsy, bent upon winning his hearer's confidence.

"On the level?"

"Surest thing you know."

"By gracious, I'd like that."

"And I infer that you would be glad to do Nick Carter a service, if possible, wouldn't you?"

"You bet I would," Steel declared, with immediate enthusiasm. "I'd be more than glad. You show me the way. I'll do the rest, Mr.——"

"My name is Garvan."

"I have heard of you, too. You must be Patsy Garvan."

"Right you are," laughed Patsy.

"Shake again. I am mighty glad to know you."

Patsy laughed agreeably, and he now felt sure he could safely trust the other. He glanced toward the rear of the store to be sure they were alone.

An open door near the office led into a side street. Near the door stood a motor cycle, with a pair of leather gloves and gaiters lying on the seat, while a leather jacket hung on a peg in the near wall.

"Do you own that machine?" inquired Patsy.

"Yes, sure," Steel nodded. "I use it sometimes to deliver hurry-up orders. It comes in handy."

"No doubt," Patsy allowed. "In regard to doing Nick Carter a service, Frank, there is something you can do for me."

"Good enough! You have only to name it, Mr. Garvan."

"This is strictly confidential, mind you."

"That goes without saying."

"And you must not afterward betray any interest in the house and person I shall mention."

"Trust me, Garvan. I'll be as dumb as an oyster."

"That's dumb enough," said Patsy approvingly. "Do you know who occupies the first flat in that third house opposite, the one with the curtains drawn down?"

"Yes," Steel quickly nodded. "She trades here in a small way. Her name is Bolton."

"Bolton, eh? That comes pretty near being Badger," thought Patsy; then, aloud: "Do you know anything about her?"

"Only that she appears a bit fly and flashy. I don't think much is known about her round here. She has been living there only a month."

"Have you seen her coming and going?"

"Yes, often."

"Alone, or with others?" questioned Patsy.

"Nearly always alone," Steel informed him. "But I have seen two persons going there to see her. I'm not dead sure that one of them does not live there, or remain there overnight. He may be a relative."

"Describe him."

"He's a young, smooth-faced chap about eighteen years old. He always wears knickerbockers and a golf cap. I don't see him very often, but I know he is there occasionally."

"I understand," nodded Patsy.

So he did, indeed. He had not the slightest doubt that the person described was Sadie Badger herself, masquerading in the same attire in which Nick had encountered her, and presumably with knavery of some kind in view. That she was thus living a double life, committing her crimes in the disguise of an innocent-looking young man, Patsy was equally confident.

"I don't know the young fellow's name," Steel added, after a moment. "I've not seen him for several days."

"Who is the other person you have seen going there?"

"An elderly man, Mr. Garvan."

"Describe him."

"Well, I should say he's about forty, or a little older, perhaps," said the clerk. "He's a man of medium build, quite dark complexion, and he wears a brown, pointed beard. He nearly always shows up about dusk, and I've seen him leaving late in the evening. That's all I know about him."

Patsy's face had taken on a more serious expression.

"Gee whiz! that description tallies perfectly with the make-up of Gaston Goulard, worn when he held up the chief last night," he was saying to himself. "Can it be that he has become friendly with Sadie Badger since that job a month ago? In that case, by Jove, they may have been in league in that robbery last night, for all the chief did not think so. It's mighty strange, if not, that Goulard showed up at just that time and forced the chief under the steps of the very crib this woman was cracking."

The coincidence was so remarkable, in fact, if such it really was, that Patsy began to fear that Nick's subterfuge might in some way miscarry. He turned to the clerk and asked more earnestly:

"Have you recently seen this man going there?"

Well, no, not very recently," Steel replied.

"Can you recall the last time?"

"About a week ago, I think."

"Does he always call alone?"

"I never have seen him with any one."

"Have you ever seen other persons going there?" questioned Patsy.

"No, never," Steel said earnestly. "She don't appear to have any female visitors. Nor any other men, in fact, than the two I have mentioned. If she does, they must call after dark, or when I am out, or—oh, by gracious, that's odd. A taxicab is stopping there. That old chap may be calling to see her."

The taxicab had passed the store while Steel was speaking, and it then had swerved quickly to the curbing in front of Sadie Badger's flat.

Patsy also had noticed it, and had caught sight of its two passengers.

One was a woman. She was reclining on the cushions in the corner nearest the store. Only her shoulder and part of her head were visible to Patsy through the taxicab window, but he could see that she was closely veiled, while her attitude and the position of her head in the angle formed by the cushioned corner denoted that she was dozing, if not sound asleep.

What most astonished Patsy Garvan was the woman's companion, however, whom he saw quite distinctly when the taxicab passed the store.

"Great guns!" he mentally exclaimed, though his face did not betray his amazement. "That's Goulard's former partner, Mr. Henry Mantell, as sure as I've got eyes in my head. What's the meaning of this? What business can he have with such a woman as Sadie Badger? He certainly is stopping there to see her."

Patsy had no doubt of his identity, did not for a moment distrust his slightly bowed figure, his gray hair and beard, his gold-bowed spectacles and distinguished, aristocratic aspect and attire, observed when the man alighted from the taxicab and hurried into the house, upon finding the door of the lower hall was unlocked.

"Gee whiz! this beats me to a standstill," thought Patsy, with increasing perplexity. "I'll be hanged if I can fathom it."

"What are you thinking about?" Steel asked curiously. "Is there something wrong?"

"I'm not sure," replied Patsy. "You keep out of sight, please, and let me do the watching. I'll make it right with you later."

"It's all right, now, Garvan," said the clerk, moving quickly to the rear of the store.

Patsy continued to gaze stealthily from the store window.

Several minutes passed and brought no change in the situation.

The curtains at the windows of the ground-floor flat had not been raised. Nothing denoted that the visitor had been admitted.

The veiled woman in the corner of the taxicab had not stirred.

The chauffeur remained as motionless on his seat as a figure of bronze.

Patsy, more deeply puzzled, fell to watching the woman, or the small part of her figure which he could see through the taxicab window. She continued motionless, as absolutely motionless as if the hand of death had been laid upon her. The veil that covered her mouth and nostrils, even, did not indicate by the slightest movement that she was breathing.

"Great guns!" thought Patsy, quite nonplused. "She

must be in a trance, or sleeping like a log. I'll be hanged if I don't have a closer look at her."

Turning to Steel, in the rear of the store, he cried quietly:

"I'll be back here in a couple of minutes."

Steel merely nodded in reply.

Patsy left the store and sauntered across the avenue, then walked more briskly toward the waiting taxicab, apparently having no interest in it, and whistling a popular song while he passed.

He took a furtive look at the chauffeur, nevertheless, who was a muscular, red-featured man of about thirty, and who appeared too stiff and staid to bestow even a glance at him.

Through the closed door of the taxicab, Patsy then shot a sharper look at the motionless woman. It did not prove more profitable than his more distant scrutiny. He could not see the face beneath the veil. He saw only that she was well dressed and appeared to be young, but he could not detect the slightest movement of her lax, apparently slumbering figure.

"By Jove, I'm going deeper into this," he muttered, walking on more rapidly. "There must be something doing that the chief doesn't even dream of, or Goulard's former partner would not be spending all this time with Sadie Badger. It's a hundred to one that he's not here to see any one else. I'll sink a pipe till I strike clear water, by gracious, if I sink it through to China."

Crossing the avenue at some distance back of the taxicab, Patsy did not venture returning to the provision store in view of the chauffeur, but turned a near corner and then ran at top speed around the block, bringing him into the side street mentioned and to the door near the rear of the store.

He had been absent so short a time that the clerk stared with surprise when he entered.

"How in thunder did you reach this door so quickly, Garvan?" he asked. "I saw you across the avenue and heading uptown only a couple of minutes ago."

"I chased myself around the block," replied Patsy, smiling a bit grimly.

"Do you suspect something wrong?"

"So strongly, Steel, that I want you to do me another favor. Yes, by Jove, I'm dead sure of it, now."

Patsy had stepped toward the front of the store and glanced again at the suspected flat. He could see two persons looking out through the parted lace draperies.

One was Sadie Badger, clad in a loose dressing gown, with her hair in disorder, as if she had hurriedly arisen from bed.

The other was the man who had entered less than ten minutes before. He was pointing toward the motionless woman in the taxicab, and Sadie Badger was laughing and nodding significantly.

All this convinced Patsy that there was something wrong, indeed; but what it was, being ignorant of what Frank Mantell was informing Nick at the very moment, he could not then conjecture.

"What favor, Garvan?" asked the clerk, when Patsy quickly returned to the rear of the store.

"Lend me your motor cycle."

"For what?"

"To follow that taxi," said Patsy. "I'm dead sure there is something doing. I cannot imagine what, but I'm determined to find out. You saw the old gentleman who entered that house. I know him quite well. He's a very wealthy man, and it looks to me like a cinch that he's in wrong in some way."

"That settles it," Steel quickly declared. "Go ahead, Garvan, and take the wheel. "You're welcome to it."

"May I borrow this leather jacket and the gaiters, also?"

"Certainly. "I have a leather cap in the office. Do you want that?"

"Sure thing," nodded Patsy. "I'll get after these people in disguise. Your garments will help to perfect it, and I'll leave mine here till I return with the wheel."

"Good enough. I'll look after them."

It took Patsy only a few moments to make the change of garments, and he then found that he had no time to spare. He heard the bang of the taxicab door, and saw that the supposed old gentleman had returned to his seat.

The veiled woman had not stirred.

The taxicab sped up the avenue.

Patsy Garvan, in leather cap, jacket, and gaiters, and with his features quickly and deftly disguised, pushed the motor cycle out through the side door.

"So long, Steel!" he said warmly. "I'll make this right with you later. You can gamble on that."

"You're welcome, Garvan, and good luck to you," was the hearty reply.

In another moment Patsy was rounding the corner and starting in hot pursuit of the distant taxicab. As he passed the house he shot one swift glance at the window of Sadie Badger's flat.

The roller shade had been drawn down.

## CHAPTER VI.

### TWO MEN WITH A WAGON.

Patsy Garvan was puzzled—more puzzled than at any time since he first saw the taxicab and its occupants, whom he had pursued undetected to a somewhat unsettled section of the Bronx.

Rounding a bend in a woodland road that was out of sight from any habitation, Patsy suddenly discovered that the taxicab, which had been briefly lost to view in the belt of woods, had stopped near one side of the road, some fifty yards in advance of him. There appeared to be no trouble with the motor, however, for the chauffeur had not alighted, nor either of the other occupants of the car.

"Gee! it certainly beats me," Patsy muttered, having hastily dismounted and found shelter back of some shrubbery on one side of the road. "What sent them out here, and why have they stopped? There seems to be nothing wrong with the car. I'll be hanged if I can make head or tail to it."

Patsy waited and watched for nearly ten minutes. He could see only the back of the taxicab, of course, and could form no idea of what its occupants were doing. Curiosity and increasing suspicion, however, impelled him to make another move.

"I'm going to find out, by thunder, if it takes a leg," he said to himself. "I'll hide the motor cycle and make a detour through the woods till I can get a look at them. They must be up to some kind of a game, or they would not remain there. I'll have one look, at least, and ease my mind."

Patsy made his preparations with some little difficulty. The ground at the side of the road was wet and soggy, and only with repeated efforts could he force the heavy motor cycle over the damp earth and through the shrubbery, finally concealing it in a thicket some ten feet from the road.

Quickly picking his way through the belt of woods, Patsy then sought a point from which he could see the side windows of the motionless taxicab. He scarce had gained this vantage point, however, when another vehicle met his gaze.

It was approaching through a narrower road making off to the east, within a dozen yards of which the taxicab was waiting.

It was a covered wagon of medium size and much the worse for time and hard usage. Its leather top was faded and parched in places. It was drawn by an old gray horse, urged on by one of two roughly clad men on the seat, both of most sinister and suspicious aspect.

Patsy did not imagine at first that any relations existed between two such hangdog-looking fellows and the supposed refined and wealthy old gentleman in the taxicab. He felt a thrill of surprise, therefore, when the latter sprang down to the road and waved his hand to them, at the same time shouting to the driver:

"Turn in this direction, Mullen, and pull up alongside. Leave me room to pass you and drive on."

Patsy heard him distinctly, though some distance away. He stopped short, crouching back of some bushes, and continued to watch the scene.

"By Jove, it's a rendezvous," he said to himself. "That's why the taxicab has been waiting here. But what business has old Mr. Mantell with these fellows? Is he playing some underhanded game, as well as Goulard?"

Patsy had not long to wait to learn of what their immediate designs consisted.

Mullen, so called, turned the wagon from the driveway and came to a stop at one side of the motionless taxicab, directly between it and the watching detective.

Then followed a brief conference in the woodland road, unheard by Patsy, who did not think it wise to venture nearer.

Mullen's hangdog companion then ran up the road as far as the bend, where he turned and waved his hand, plainly signifying that no observer was in sight.

Patsy then saw the other three men hasten to the door of the taxicab. He could see only their legs for a few moments, by gazing under the intervening wagon, but presently they appeared at the rear end of it, bearing between them—the lax form of the veiled woman.

"Thundering guns!" thought Patsy, when their designs became obvious. "They have come out here to get rid of that woman, or to transfer her to some place. She's not dead, or her form would be rigid by this time. She must be drugged. But who is she, and what motive can old Mantell have for such conduct? Gee! it's up to me to find out where they take her and what they intend doing."

Mullen had hurriedly raised the back flap of the leather top, and the woman was quickly placed on the floor of the wagon. The flap then was dropped and buckled, and Mullen hastened to mount to his seat, where his returning companion quickly joined him.

The taxicab sped away in the meantime, containing only the chauffeur and the solitary passenger, and within half a minute it had vanished around a corner of the woodland road.

"Let him go. I can nail him, by Jove, at any time," thought Patsy, now grim and frowning. "It's up to me to look after the woman."

Mullen then was turning the wagon, and in another moment he drove away through the diverging road with his ill-favored companion—and his senseless burden.

Patsy Garvan did not return to get the motor cycle. He knew it would be of no advantage in trailing a slow-moving wagon over a rough road. He stole down to the edge of the woods, gave Mullen a lead of something like fifty yards, and then he proceeded to follow him.

"The rear flap being down, the rascals cannot discover me unless they lean out and look back," he said to himself. "I'll fool them in that case, even, by hugging the side of the road. If they see me, or give me the slip, by Jove, they shall have a medal."

There was one contingency, however, on which Patsy did not figure, and which was too remote to have appealed to the most farsighted of detectives.

The taxicab was returning, was speeding toward the city. It passed the crossroad several minutes after the wagon and its stealthy pursuer had departed. It sped on around the bend in the road—and the chauffeur then brought it to a quick stop.

The man within had undergone a decided change. His gray hair, his pointed beard, his gold-bowed spectacles, all had disappeared. Instead of the refined, venerable countenance that had deceived Patsy Garvan, even, there now appeared the malignant, hard-featured white face of Gaston Goulard.

"What is it, Fallon?" he cried, starting up from his seat. "Why have you stopped here?"

The chauffeur pointed to one side of the road.

"That caught my eye," he replied, with an expressive cant of his head. "It doesn't look good to me."

"What do you mean?"

"That deep rut."

"What do you make of it?"

Goulard leaped down to the road, Fallon following.

"A motor cycle has been here," said the chauffeur. "It was here only a few minutes ago, too, or this soggy earth would not have retained the tracks so plainly. Here are the fellow's footprints, too, left when he dragged the wheel out of the road."

Goulard's hard face took on a terrible frown. He uttered an oath, crouching to examine the imprints; then added harshly:

"Can we have been seen? Can we have been seen, Fallon?"

"Followed, perhaps," suggested Fallon tersely.

"Followed—impossible!" Goulard snarled between his teeth. "Who could have followed us? Who could have had any reason for doing so?"

"Nick Carter himself, possibly, or——"

"Carter be hanged," snapped Goulard, interrupting. "Carter cannot possibly have learned of this job. Only Mullen and the gang knew I had it framed up. Carter cannot have got wise since we turned the trick—that's out of the question."

"Unless Sadie Badger——"

"Sadie knew nothing about it until I went to warn her against the infernal dick," Goulard again cut in fiercely.

"Blast him, is he out again to queer my game? Whether he is, or not, I'll have him in my clutches as soon as he attempts it. I've got that fixed with Sadie, and well fixed, too. He'll get his, all right, if he tries to pull off the stunt I think he has in view. I'm wise to it. I'm on to Carter, now, and his infernal tricks. He——"

"You'd better look into this, Goulard, instead of frothing over what the dick can accomplish," interrupted Fallon, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "We can find out, perhaps, who has been here. There are no tracks showing that the motor cycle was pulled back into the road."

Fallon parted the shrubbery and strode in through the underbrush and bushes, while speaking, Goulard following close behind him.

"Ah! I thought so!" Fallon suddenly exclaimed. "Here's the machine. The fellow hid it in this thicket."

"He may be watching us, then, at this moment," growled Goulard, gazing sharply around.

"I guess not."

"You mean?"

"He had other reasons for hiding it so carefully," Fallon forcibly argued. "He could have watched all that took place after Mullen and Simp Sampson showed up, Goulard, without lugging that heavy wheel so far into the woods."

"You think he saw all that came off?"

"I'm dead sure of it."

"And now——"

"There's nothing to it," Fallon cut in again. "He has gone in pursuit of Mullen's wagon. He didn't know how far he might have to go, nor how long it would take him. That's why he hid that wheel so far from the road."

Goulard was not slow to appreciate this reasoning, nor in deciding what course he would shape. There was murder in his eyes when, dragging Fallon back to the road, he commanded hurriedly:

"Return to town alone, Bill, and follow the directions I have given you. Make sure there is no slip-up. If I'm in wrong again; if these infernal Carters are wise to my game and are out to thwart me, I'll wipe one and all of them off the map! Leave me here, Bill, and return alone. I'll soon find out, by thunder, who is after Mullen and the wagon."

## CHAPTER VII.

### A TIMELY ARRIVAL.

Patsy Garvan arrived within an hour at his destination, or, rather, that of Mullen and his evil-eyed companion. Through a break in the belt of woods Patsy could see the end of the narrow road, through which he had trailed the two crooks and the covered wagon.

Scattered dwellings, also, could be seen in the distance, all of a cheap and inferior type. Farther away were the poles and wires of a suburban trolley line, all denoting that he was approaching the outskirt of one of the many inferior settlements to be found in that part of the Bronx.

To the right of the narrow road, however, brought into view just before reaching the break of the woodland, was a faded, isolated old house of considerable size, the grounds, stable, and outbuildings of which denoted that it had been a desirable place in the remote past, though then in a miserably run-down and wretched condition.

From below a low, moss-covered wall flanking one side of the place, Patsy saw the wagon enter an ill-kept driveway, the broken gate of which was hanging awry on its rusted hinges.

From a back door of the house came a tall, gaunt man of nearly sixty, clad in overalls and a red cardigan jacket, whose looks and bearing denoted that he was the owner, or tenant of the place. He paused at the edge of the driveway, with lowering gaze fixed upon the men in the approaching wagon, and Patsy heard him growl tersely, in harsh, nasal tones:

"Got her?"

"Bet you!" Mullen responded. "Got her dead to rights, Jim, and none the wiser."

"Don't bank too heavily on that," thought Patsy, with grim satisfaction, though he never was more puzzled in his life. "I'm wise to some extent, at least. You rats are up to some devilish game, though I cannot fathom how old Mantell figures in it."

"You saw his nibs, then," remarked the man in a cardigan.

"Sure. He rode out with Fallon in his taxi, as he promised," said Mullen. "He's gone back to town, Corson, to look after a job he has framed up with Sadie."

"What kind of a job, Jake?"

"To get the big dick."

"The big dick?" echoed Corson, staring. "You don't mean Nick Carter?"

"That's what. He's the biggest dick in the running."

"But how in thunder——"

"I'll tell you later, Jim," Mullen interrupted, still on his seat in the wagon. "We first must dispose of the skirt. She's dead to the world just now, but there's no telling for how long. His nibs said she might come to time inside of an hour."

"Drive into the stable, then," Corson replied, with a growl. "We'll put her in the safe deposit. The devil himself could not find her."

Mullen drove on and into the stable, Corson following, and Patsy lost sight of the man and wagon, a side view of the stable being all that he then could obtain.

"His nibs—that must mean Mantell," he said to himself. "But who is the woman and what's the old man's game? Why would he drug any woman and give her in charge of these rascals? Gone back to town to frame up a job with Sadie Badger against the chief. Gee! this certainly is the strangest mix-up that I ever tackled. I must find a way to inform Nick and put him on his guard. Before doing so, however, I'll try to get next to the whole business. There's nothing to putting him wise to only half of it."

Sharply viewing the windows of the old house, Patsy could discover no sign of any other occupant. He saw, too, that he could reach the rear of the stable by crawling back of the wall under which he had found shelter.

He at once proceeded to do so, bent upon clearing up the mystery, if possible, and a few moments later he crept over the low wall and stole to a point between the stable and an old shed near by.

He then paused again and listened. He could hear only the thud of the horse's hoofs on the stable floor. He quickly discovered, however, that the sound came through a square window, then nearly closed with a sliding wooden

shutter, and outside of which was a great pile of soiled straw and bedding from a stall.

"Gee! that's good enough for me," thought Patsy, quickly sizing up the possibilities. "I'll take one chance at that window. That shutter is not quite closed."

Stealing nearer, with eyes and ears alert, he crawled up the pile of refuse and peered in through the narrow slit between the shutter and its casing.

The interior of the old stable met his gaze. One of the men, Simp Sampson, so called, had unhitched the horse and was making him fast in a near stall.

In another, out of which he had kicked a quantity of straw and bedding, Mullen was raising a large trap-door, drawing it up by means of a ring in the floor.

Patsy could see through the opening a flight of wooden steps leading down into a dark hole under the floor, the depth and extent of which he could only conjecture.

"Gee! that's a secret hiding place, all right," he said to himself. "The bedding in the stall would ordinarily conceal the trapdoor. Besides, who would be looking for one in a horse's stall? I'm evidently up against a gang that makes a business of crooked work. If I can corner them——"

Patsy's train of thought ended when Mullen, having tipped the trapdoor back against one side of the stall, turned and said to Corson, who had been grimly watching him:

"Lend a hand, Jim, and we'll lug her down there. It will be safer than keeping her in the house until we learn how the cat's going to jump. Is the old woman in the house?"

"Not now," said Corson, with his habitual growl. "She's gone to market. It takes some grub, Mullen, to feed you fellows."

"We'll have coin enough for grub, Jim, if his nibs gets all he's banking on from this job," Mullen pointedly answered.

"I hope he'll get it, then. We need it."

"And we were dead lucky in getting a whack at a piece of it," Mullen added. "That came of my friendship with Fallon, who knows all about his nibs and has been standing in with him on this job. The taxi came in handy, you know. The trick could not have been turned without it."

"Not very well, Jake."

"Fallon reckoned that I knew of a safe place for the skirt, and having got safely away with her, we're dead lucky to be in the game. Here, you, Sampson, lay hold and lift her out."

Mullen had been unbuckling the back flap of the wagon top while speaking, and Sampson had secured the horse and emerged from the near stall.

Together the three men raised the form of the senseless woman from the wagon and placed her on the stable floor. Her hat dropped off while they were doing so and the veil fell from her white, expressionless face.

Patsy Garvan caught his breath with sudden amazement.

"Holy smoke! That's young Mantell's wife, Helen Mantell," was his first thought, while the three men stood gazing down at her. "Gee! there's more to this than I guessed. Can it be that the old man has soured on her and wants her out of the way? I cannot believe that. There is more to this job than I have suspected."

Patsy's conflicting thoughts were diverted again by Mullen, who suddenly said bluntly:

"Get a move on. It won't do to let her lie here. Some one might show up. Lay hold, both of you; it will take all three of us to lug her down to the steps."

"She'll stay there, all right, once we've put her there and fastened the trapdoor," growled Corson. "There's no other way out."

"In that case, by Jove, you rascals shall stay there with her," thought Patsy, with sudden, grim determination. "I'll keep you there, by thunder, if I can catch you in your own trap. It won't take me long to find help and arrest all three of you."

Patsy's sudden resolve then appeared entirely feasible, barring one fact. He did not know by what means the trap could be so secured as to prevent the three men from raising it from below, providing he went in search of assistants. He was not long, however, in solving the problem.

"I have it," he muttered, with a constant eye on the three crooks. "I'll shift the horse into that stall and make him fast. He'll hold them down, all right. They cannot raise the trapdoor with him on it. I'll get assistance and arrest all three, and then telephone to the chief."

The three knaves, bearing their senseless burden, then were on their way through the trapdoor. Step by step they descended, laboring somewhat in the gloom and on the narrow stairs. Presently the last of the three heads, that of gaunt Jim Corson, disappeared below the stall floor.

Patsy then moved quickly, but as quietly as a shadow. He pushed aside the sliding shutter, then crawled through the open window and dropped noiselessly on the stable floor.

Not for an instant did he shrink from his hazardous undertaking, or hesitate because of the perils involved. He felt sure he could accomplish it.

Shifting a revolver to a side pocket of his leather jacket, he crept back of the covered wagon and approached the stall in which the open trapdoor yawned like the mouth of a black, bottomless pit. He could hear the voices and movements of the three crooks, but not a ray of light was discernible below.

"Now, you rascals, stay there till I come to arrest you," thought Patsy. "It won't be long."

He stretched out his hand to grasp the edge of the trapdoor and throw it down—but did not do so.

A fourth man had stepped stealthily into the stable. He appeared like an evil shadow in the waning light of the November afternoon. The stillness was broken by a voice as cold and hard as steel, but as threatening as the hiss of a viper:

"Stop! If you drop that door—you'll drop with it."

Patsy, crouching on the floor near the entrance to the stall, turned around as if electrified.

He found himself covered with an automatic revolver, scarce six feet away, and beheld, with a gasp of momentary dismay, the scowling, white face of Gaston Goulard.

"Gee whiz! the trick's off!" leaped like a flash through his mind.

"You'll be a dead one if you drop that door," Goulard added sternly.

"I'll not drop it. I wasn't going to drop it," said Patsy, quickly resorting to a subterfuge.

"You wasn't, eh?"

"Divil a drop! I was only looking to see what's down there. I——"

"You keep your hands in front of you," Goulard snapped sharply, when Patsy's right hand stole nearer his pocket. "If any gun is to be used, it will be this one. Come up, you fellows, and be quick about it. Get a grip on this rat and strap his arms behind him. Move lively."

The heads of Corson and Jake Mullen had appeared above the stall floor, both having heard the above conversation, but both were so startled by the scene that they had come no farther. They now hastened to obey, however, followed by Sampson, all three of whom seized Patsy quickly and secured his arms behind him.

Before this was accomplished, noting Goulard's garments and traces of grease paint on his frowning face, Patsy hit upon the truth in so far as the rascal's impersonation of the elder Mantell was concerned, as well as the nature of the crime in which these several scoundrels now were engaged."

"The old man was Goulard himself. He has abducted Frank Mantell's wife," he quickly reasoned. "He must be wise to the trick the chief has played on Sadie Badger, also, or at least suspect it, or he would not have delayed to visit her before bringing Helen Mantell out here. By Jove, I had a hunch the chief might be in wrong. Things look a bit rocky, for fair."

Patsy's face betrayed none of these thoughts, however, but wore an expression as if he wondered why he had incurred such animosity and rough handling. He gazed at Goulard, after being jerked to his feet by the others, who were hastening to bind him, and demanded, with well-feigned perplexity:

"What's it all about, anyway? What are you putting over on me?"

"The boot's on the other leg," snapped Goulard. "We're preventing your putting something across us."

"I know nothing about you. I——"

"You lie. You followed me from town with a motor cycle. I found it in the woods, where you hid it."

"You did, eh?"

"Furthermore, I think I know you," added Goulard, stepping nearer to Patsy and snatching the disguise from his face. "Ah, I thought so. You're cute and clever, Garvan, but you're not in my class, as you now will find at some cost. Get his revolver, Corson. You'll find it in his side pocket. I saw him stealthily reaching for it."

"It's dead lucky for you, Goulard, that I did not get my hand on it," retorted Patsy, now seeing the utter folly of further subterfuge. "I'd have ended your vicious career the first crack from the box."

"You would, eh?" sneered Goulard maliciously.

"That's what I would," snapped Patsy.

"You'll never have that satisfaction, Garvan."

"Wait and see," growled Patsy, while Corson disarmed him and appropriated his weapons. "It's a long, long way to Tipperary."

"What in thunder's the meaning of all this?" Mullen now demanded, grim with astonishment. "Where did the infernal runt come from?"

"I'll tell you presently," said Goulard, who was apparently very well satisfied with having arrived in time to secure the detective. "Have you taken the woman down below?"

"Yes, of course," Mullen nodded. "That's the safest place."

"Any old place is safe enough, now that we've got this rat," said Goulard confidently. "I'll have his chief before midnight, too, unless my wires get crossed. Bring the woman up again and take her into the house. I want to revive her and force her to write a letter to her husband. Bring in this rat, too. I want to tell him where he stands. He'll find mighty soon that I've got things dead to rights."

Patsy said nothing. He began to fear, in fact, that the rascal really had.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### NICK CARTER'S INSIGHT.

It was late in the afternoon. The dusk had begun to gather, and lamps were gleaming in some of the store windows.

Daylight still found its way into the business office of Nick Carter's residence, however, when he hung up his telephone receiver and placed the instrument on his desk. His only companion was his chief assistant, and the faces of both were unusually grave.

"Who was it?" Chick inquired, when Nick turned in his swivel chair.

"A man who said his name is Frank Steel," Nick replied. "He is employed in a Lexington Avenue provision store. He wanted to know whether Patsy had returned with his motor cycle."

"By gracious, that beats hearing nothing from Patsy," Chick cried, with countenance lighting. "It gives us a hint, at least, at what has occurred to him. What more did he say? Could he give you any definite information?"

"Some very suggestive information," Nick replied. "I begin to scent the rat in the meal. I can tell you in a nutshell."

Nick then proceeded to do so. Steel had, in fact, become quite anxious concerning Patsy's prolonged absence, and he had told Nick all that had transpired in the provision store that day, also informing him of Patsy's interest in the occupant of the opposite flat, and all about the man who had called there.

"By Jove, there is only one way of sizing that up," said Chick, after listening intently. "We know that old Mr. Mantell did not go there. The man who called, then, must have been Goulard."

"Undoubtedly."

"And Patsy must have recognized him."

"No, not so," Nick quickly objected. "That's the trouble. That's why he is in wrong, unless I am much mistaken."

"You mean——"

"If he had recognized Goulard, he would have arrested him on the spot," Nick interposed. "The circumstances admit of only one interpretation."

"Namely?"

"Patsy supposed him to be the elder Mantell, and the fact that he was calling on Sadie Badger, or some other serious suspicion concerning him, led Patsy to pursue the taxicab. There's no other way of sizing it up."

"He may have recognized Helen Mantell," Chick suggested.

"That is not probable," Nick again objected. "Goulard

would not have been running around with her in a taxicab, unless she was completely drugged and carefully veiled."

"Not likely, Nick, I'll admit," Chick nodded.

"I'm sure of it."

"But what sent Goulard to see Sadie Badger?" Chick questioned. "Why did he take such a risk?"

"I think I know," Nick said gravely.

"What do you make of it?"

"His visit alone shows that they must be on a friendly footing."

"Surely."

"I think, Chick, that he saw that newspaper story of the robbery Sadie committed last night," Nick continued. "He may not have known that she had the job in view, but he probably knew under the steps of whose house he cornered and confined me. After reading the story of the robbery, he may have had some reason to suspect Sadie of having been the thief. He may know that she has been friendly with Buckley's clerk, who gave her the tip that caused her to do the job."

"By Jove, there may be something in that," Chick quickly allowed.

"Knowing, then, under what circumstances I was there, Goulard may have reasoned that I perhaps got wise to something. After reading the newspaper story, then, he evidently hastened to put Sadie Badger on her guard."

"Very likely. I see the point."

"If I am right, and his visit under such circumstances strongly indicates that I am, Sadie would have told him of her encounter with me and all that followed," Nick added, a bit grimly.

"By Jove, that's too true for a joke," Chick quickly declared. "In that case, Nick, your subterfuge is all off, and the woman may have bolted."

"You are right on one point, Chick."

"Regarding the subterfuge?"

"Yes."

"But not the other?"

"I think not," Nick said thoughtfully. "Both Goulard and Sadie Badger have extraordinary nerve. They don't scare easily. Both, moreover, would give a trifle, or even take a desperate chance, to wipe me off the map."

"No doubt of it."

"Here's a very significant point, then," Nick added. "Both will naturally reason that I know nothing about their relations, and that I expect to get by with my subterfuge and accomplish something extraordinary."

"Certainly. That is the only logical way they can be regarded."

"That being the case, then, they may decide to let me attempt it—with a view to trapping me and wiping me out."

"By gracious, that's even more probable," cried Chick. "You are right, Nick. I was wrong on one point. I would be willing to wager, now, that Sadie Badger has not bolted. I would almost bet, in fact, that she and Goulard have something framed up for you."

"I really think so myself, Chick."

"But there is one other contingency."

"Namely?"

"Patsy's long absence and the fact that we have not heard from him," said Chick. "He must be in wrong, or he would have found some way to communicate such important information as Steel has stated. If he has fallen into Goulard's hands, Goulard may have warned the woman to get out of her flat."

"I don't think so," said Nick. "Goulard would reason that Patsy, whatever he may have learned, has had no opportunity to inform us since obtaining his evidence."

"Right again," Chick quickly nodded. "But what scheme will they shape up by which to get you? If we knew——"

"There is only one way of learning," Nick cut in.

"By going up against it?"

"Exactly."

"You intend doing so?"

"I certainly do."

"When?"

"At once. Before they can find time to learn more than they already know," Nick declared. "I'll pay Sadie Badger my promised visit within half an hour."

"But where do I fit in?" Chick inquired. "How can I aid you to the best advantage?"

Nick gazed thoughtfully at the floor for several moments. Then, abruptly looking up, he said quickly:

"Listen. I'll tell you how."

Precisely half an hour later, as Nick had predicted, a roughly clad man, a perfect likeness of Sadie Badger's partner in crime the previous night, entered the vestibule of the Lexington Avenue flat and pressed the electric bell.

At just about the same time, unobserved by any of the few pedestrians then in that locality, a second man stole into an alley leading to the rear of the brick block, and sought the gloomy yard back of the third house.

This second man was Chick Carter.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE COUNTERSTROKE.

The bright light within illumined the drawn curtains of the Lexington Avenue flat, casting on them a filigree shadow of the filmy lace draperies, convincing Nick Carter before he had entered that Sadie Badger had not bolted.

Nick's ring was quickly answered, moreover, by the woman herself. He saw the evil light that flashed up for an instant in her intense black eyes when she saw and recognized him, which further assured him that he not only had sized up the circumstances correctly, but also that her designs were precisely what he suspected.

Sadie Badger greeted him with a smile, however, placing her forefinger on her lips and glancing significantly up the stairs.

"Not too loud, Bosey, till we're inside and the door closed," she said quietly, drawing back for him to enter. "I'm a bit leary of those ginks on the next floor. What they don't know won't hurt them. If they get wise to too much, it might hurt me."

Nick nodded approvingly, with a grim smile on his made-up, hangdog face, and he took the chair to which she pointed. He noticed that her hat, veil, and a long black cloak were lying on a sofa, as if she had just come in, or intended going out.

"That's good judgment, kid," he replied, in the same husky voice he had assumed the previous night. "There's nothing lost by keeping others in the dark."

"Right you are, Bosey."

"Was you looking for me to-night?"

"Sure thing," nodded Sadie, sitting opposite. "You said you'd come, didn't you? I always take the word of a pal. Have you seen the newspapers?"

"All of them, kid. I nailed them as soon as the story was out. But the dicks ain't wise to anything. You've still got the stuff safe in the house?"

"No, not here, now," said Sadie. "That was too long a chance. I've put it in care of some friends, but I can get it any hour we want it."

"I dunno about that," Nick demurred, with manifest suspicion.

"You can bank on me and what I tell you, Bosey, and that goes," Sadie hastened to assure him. "I wouldn't double cross a pal. You can meet my friends and see the plunder for yourself, if you like."

"How's that?" questioned Nick, though he saw plainly to what she immediately was leading.

"I've got to go out there," Sadie glibly explained. "I'd have been gone before now, Bosey, if I hadn't been looking for you. I had a hunch you would show up quite early, so I decided to wait for you."

"What's the game?" Nick questioned, still pretending to be a bit doubtful.

It convinced Sadie Badger that he did not suspect her deeper game, and that he would walk blindly into the trap she and Goulard had laid for him.

"There's another job on, Bosey," she replied, with voice lowered.

"What kind of a job, kid?"

"Same kind. A crib up in Riverside Drive. It has been sized up by another pal of mine, and a good haul can be made, but it will take three or four of us to pull it off. I've told him about you, Bosey, and insisted that you be let in on it. I've not forgotten last night, you see," Sadie added expressively.

"You're all right, kid," Nick grimly nodded. "But when is the trick to be turned?"

"To-morrow night. I've got to go out and talk it over with the other this evening. You're to go with me, if the scheme hits you all right."

"Sure it hits me all right," Nick quickly declared. "But where do we go to see them?"

"A good piece out of town."

"By train?"

"No. Taxi."

"Ain't that taking a chance?" growled Nick, still seeming doubtful. "I don't bank strong on chauffeurs."

"The one I employ is all right," said Sadie, with sinister earnestness. "He is one of the gang. We can trust him the limit."

"Well, that's more like it," said Nick. "What's his name?"

"Fallon."

"How can you get at him?"

"By telephone," said Sadie, with a glance at an instrument on a stand in one corner. "He's expecting to hear from me. I've been waiting only for you to show up, Bosey, and say you would go."

Nick was very willing to go, and he saw no reason to defer doing so, the woman's assurance convincing him that she felt that she held the ribbons and that he suspected no ulterior designs. Nick had not a doubt, moreover, as to whom he was to meet.

"Sure, kid, I'll go," he said, after a moment. "Why wouldn't I go?"

"No reason, Bosey."

"Get next to the phone, then, and fetch on your man. We can't start too soon to suit me."

"That's the stuff!" cried Sadie, with another momentary gleam of satisfaction in her eyes. "I'll have him here with his buzz car in five minutes."

She arose with the last and hastened to the telephone.

Nick fished out a black cigar and lit it, smoking indifferently until the woman resumed her seat. He then continued the conversation much along the foregoing lines, until the noise of the approaching taxicab was heard by both, when Sadie started up and exclaimed:

"He's here, Bosey. That's Fallon."

"So I heard."

"I'll get into my cloak and lid."

"Stop a bit, kid," said Nick, checking her and lurching forward in his chair. "Lemme have a look at him before we start."

"What's that for?" questioned Sadie quickly.

"Only because I like to see who I'm in with," Nick explained indifferently. "Call him in and give him your directions. That'll be enough."

Sadie Badger saw nothing for him to gain, if she complied with his wish, feeling that she had all the best of him. She shrugged her broad, shapely shoulders and laughed, then stepped to the front door and called Fallon into the house.

"He is here, Bosey," she remarked, when the burly chauffeur followed her into the room. "Shake hands with Bosey Magee, Bill, who is going out with me. You'll find him all right."

Fallon grinned and complied.

"The more the better, old top," he remarked carelessly. "Glad to know you," Nick growled cordially.

"Take us out to Corson's place, Bill, and get there lively," said Sadie, in compliance with Nick's suggestion.

"I can make it in twenty minutes," Fallon nodded.

"Good enough. I'll get into my rags and veil and be with you in a couple of minutes."

"I'll wait for you outside."

"Go ahead, then. We'll not be long."

Fallon swung round and swaggered out of the house, returning to his seat in the taxicab.

Sadie Badger arose and took her cloak from the sofa.

When she turned to put it on—she found Nick Carter confronting her, with a revolver thrust under her very nose.

"If you speak, Sadie, this will speak louder," he said sternly, gripping her by the shoulder. "Not a sound, mind you, or you'll get all that's coming to you."

The woman turned as white as the knot of lace at her throat.

"Heavens!" she muttered, with lips twitching. "You mean——"

"Silence!" Nick sternly hissed. "I'm wise to the whole business. Our partnership in crime is ended, also your little game. If you utter a sound to warn Fallon, I'll send you to prison for twenty years."

"Curse you, Carter, I——"

"Hush! Ah, Chick, you're here!"

Chick Carter had darted quietly in from a rear room.

Sadie Badger had dropped on the sofa, as pale as if death-stricken.

"I picked the lock of the back door," Chick whispered. "Is the way open?"

"Wide open," said Nick, whipping out a pair of handcuffs. "Get into her garments. We must be out in another minute. I'll fix the woman."

Sadie Badger, with the detective's threat ringing in her ears, which she knew only too well he would execute, collapsed completely and offered no resistance.

Nick handcuffed her with her arms behind her, then tied a bandage securely over her mouth. He then marched her into a closet in the adjoining room and locked the door.

When he returned, after less than a minute, he found Chick clad in the woman's hat and veil, with his figure almost completely enveloped in her long, black cloak.

"Capital!" said Nick, surveying him. "You'll get by hands down."

"I think so."

"Ready?"

"As a rivet."

Nick switched out the electric light.

Fallon saw the glow vanish from the curtained windows. Less than two minutes had passed since he returned to his seat.

He merely glanced at the two figures that came from the house, quickly crossing the sidewalk in the darkness and entering the open taxicab. The door was closed with a bang, and another moment saw them speeding away—whither Sadie Badger had directed.

Five minutes later a policeman, acting under instructions Nick had given him earlier, entered the flat and removed the detective's partner in crime to the precinct station.

It was half past six when Fallon slowed down in the darkness of the narrow road into which he had turned, immediately drawing up at one side of it. He stopped the motor, then sprang down and opened the cab door.

"We'll have to walk to the house, Sadie," he growled, addressing the veiled figure in the opposite corner. "I'll not risk running the taxi over this bum road in the dark. It's only fifty yards to the house. We can walk it."

"Sure!" said Nick. "Come on, kid."

Fallon drew back to let them out, turning to gaze up the narrow, deserted road.

Nick stepped in front of him, drawing his revolver.

"Put your hands behind you, Fallon," he said sternly. "You are under arrest. Take it easy and save yourself worse trouble."

Fallon staggered and glanced back over his shoulder in search of Sadie Badger. The hat, veil, and cloak had been discarded by the figure behind him, and he found himself gazing at the face of Chick Carter.

"Good heavens!" he gasped involuntarily. "What am I up against?"

"You know, Fallon, without my telling you," said Nick. "The game is up, and we're out to get the entire gang. We're going to do it, too."

"I guess that's no fairy tale." Fallon knuckled with a sickly smile. "You're the worst ever, Carter, the very worst. Well, I'm not in so bad, at that. Go as far as you like."

"Put bracelets on him, Chick, and we'll secure him with another pair to one of the taxicab wheels," Nick directed. "That will hold him till we return."

"Let me sit inside," said Fallon. "I'll not bolt."

"I shall feel a little more easy if I don't take the chance," Nick dryly answered. "You'll not suffer greatly, and it won't be for long."

Fallon offered no further protest, and was left secured as described.

"Now, Chick, having landed a couple of the hirelings, we'll get after the master," said Nick, as they turned away. "Unless I am much mistaken, we to-night shall see the last of Gaston Goulard, in so far as his criminal career is concerned. He is booked to pay the penalty."

"That's likely to be his life for having killed Batty Lang."

"It's more than probable. Come on."

"You expect to find Helen Mantell here, I infer."

"I haven't a doubt of it," said Nick. "Be quiet, now, and have your guns ready. I'll lead the way."

They had moved on and were picking their way up the narrow road. Through the intervening trees, the outlines of the old Corson house could be dimly seen. A solitary light appeared at one of the side windows.

Nick led the way in that direction, moving noiselessly over the damp sod. It proved to be the window of a dining room, as he could see between the curtain and the casing, though the roller shade was drawn completely down.

No other precautions had been taken by Gaston Goulard, however, so sure was he that the expected taxicab would bring only Fallon, Sadie Badger, and Nick, with the latter up against odds that he could not possibly oppose.

Though none of them were entirely visible, Nick could see that there were several persons in the room. While he gazed, trying to identify one or more of them, he heard the voice of the crook he was chiefly seeking.

"I'll not stand for any further objections, Mrs. Mantell," Goulard was harshly saying. "You write what I dictate to your husband, stating the terms I direct, or I'll——"

"Don't you do anything of the kind, Mrs. Mantell," interrupted a voice that Nick instantly knew to be Patsy's. "Let this rascal collect the ransom he demands as best he can. He'll not harm you as long as he sees any show of getting it. Don't write a line, or——"

"You keep quiet, or I'll silence you in a way you'll not fancy," Goulard fiercely cut in. "I'll put you away, Garvan, as well as Nick Carter, if I do nothing else. You listen to me, woman, and——"

Nick did not wait to hear more. He touched Chick's elbow and continued on toward the rear of the house, where the door of the kitchen met his gaze.

"We have them where we want them, Chick, if we can enter quietly," he whispered.

"Dead to rights," Chick nodded.

"There is no lock on the door. It may be hooked or bolted on the inside. No, by Jove, it is not. They were cocksure of their game, all right."

Nick had tried the door and found that he could open it. He did so, glancing at Chick, and both stepped into the kitchen.

The only light came through a doorway in the near hall, that of the dining room.

The voice of Goulard again could be heard, addressing the abducted woman and rising loud and harsh with his

threats and commands. It served to completely drown the stealthy steps in the hall.

Suddenly it stopped short, as if the miscreant's tongue had been palsied, and then came a shriek of dismay that was bloodcurdling in its intensity.

Goulard saw Nick and Chick in the open door, with hard-set faces and drawn revolvers.

A shout came from Patsy, bound hand and foot to a chair.

A scream of relief broke from Helen Mantell, seated white and helpless in one corner.

Mullen, Sampson, and Jim Corson, with jaws suddenly dropping, stared as if they beheld two ghosts.

"Sit still, all of you," Nick calmly commanded. "I will shoot the first man who shows fight or makes a move in that direction."

Only one man did so—Goulard.

A vision of the electric chair must have leaped up in his mind. For his face turned as gray as ashes, and he appeared to choose the quicker fate. He whipped out a revolver, clapped the muzzle against his ribs, and fired.

The thundering report fairly shook the house.

Goulard pitched face forward on the floor, shot through the heart.

It was the last step of a downward career, the last act of a man gone hopelessly to the bad.

The arrest of the others was easily accomplished, with nothing more sensational than imprecations and curses. Nine o'clock that evening saw all that remained of the gang securely lodged in the Tombs.

The same hour saw Helen Mantell restored to her husband's arms, and the cloud of fear that had hung over the Mantell mansion was dispelled forever.

Though uninjured by the experience she had suffered, Helen could only state that, after riding away with the man she had supposed to be her father-in-law, he had almost immediately seized her and plunged a needle into her neck, evidently impregnated with some powerful and quick-acting drug. She knew no more until she revived in the old Corson place, scarce a half hour before Nick Carter's arrival.

The gratitude of the Mantells, as well as their reward to the detectives for their splendid work, were all that the Carters could ask, and Patsy made sure that Frank Steel got his for the services rendered.

The crooks suffered the extreme penalty for their crime, including Nick's partner in knavery—but the detective made sure that the Buckley plunder was restored to its owner.

It was found in the secret cellar under the Corson stable—with the hidden fruits of several previous robberies.

"Taken as a whole," Nick Carter remarked that evening; "it was the round-up and wind-up of a very bad gang."

THE END.

"The Mystery of the Crossed Needles; or, Nick Carter and the Yellow Tong," will be the title of the long, complete story which you will find in the next issue, No. 151, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out July 31st. In this interesting narrative the famous detective matches wits with a clever Chinese crook, and throughout the story there is a constant mental battle between the man of the Orient and the man of the Occident. Then, too, you will also find the usual installment of the serial now running, together with several interesting articles.

# Sheridan of the U. S. Mail.

By RALPH BOSTON.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 148 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ONE LITTLE SLIP.

Judge Lawrence opened the case for the defense by assuring the jury that it would take but a few minutes to present all his evidence. The first witness counsel for the defense placed on the stand was the prisoner himself. In as few words as possible, Owen told how he had incurred the enmity of Samuel Coggswell by exposing the latter's plot to tamper with Judge Lawrence's mail. He explained that for the same reason he had also aroused the animosity of Carrier Smithers, of Branch X Y.

"Our next witness will be Carrier John Smithers," announced Judge Lawrence, when Owen had finished.

Smithers, sullen and hostile, glared at his questioner as the latter asked quietly: "You and Carrier Sheridan occupy adjoining rooms in a boarding house, do you not, Mr. Smithers?"

"We do."

"And you were off duty and in your room at the boarding house the day the inspectors visited the house and searched Sheridan's trunk?"

"Yes, I was; but if you're trying to infer——" began the witness angrily.

"Never mind what I'm trying to infer, Mr. Smithers," interrupted the lawyer gently. "Step down, please, unless the district attorney wishes to cross-examine; I'm through with you."

He turned to the jury with a pleasant smile. "But one more witness; then our case is finished. I shall now call Mr. Alfred Adams."

As Mr. Adams, a gray-haired, bespectacled man, took the stand, Jake Hines stared at him in astonishment. Who could this fellow be? Jake had never seen him before, and the name suggested nothing to him. He wondered what the calling of this witness could mean.

"Mr. Adams," began counsel for the defense, very softly, "will you please tell the jury what your occupation is?"

"I am a postal clerk employed at the registry window of Branch Post Office D E."

"At Branch D E. That's the branch from which the package was mailed," explained the lawyer. "And how long have you been employed there, Mr. Adams?"

"For seventeen years," replied the gray-haired witness proudly.

"Seventeen years! That's a long time, Mr. Adams. Have you made many mistakes in your work during that period?"

"Not a single mistake, sir," replied the postal clerk, still more proudly, and added, with a smile: "The boys at the branch call me 'Accurate' Adams."

"An enviable nickname," said Judge Lawrence. "Now,

tell me, sir, is it your custom to weigh all letters and packages that are handed in at your window for registry?"

"Yes, sir; we are required to do that."

"It is a precaution no registry clerk overlooks?"

"Yes, sir. You see, the rules require us to see that letters and packages are sufficiently stamped before we make out a receipt for them. If the letter or package is overweight, we call the sender's attention to the fact, and he must supply the deficient postage before we will accept it."

"I see. Then it would not be possible for a man to hand you a sealed package weighing over seven ounces, and bearing only three two-cent stamps and a ten-cent stamp for registration—you wouldn't give him his registry receipt under such circumstances?"

"Certainly not, sir," replied the postal clerk. "The package, being sealed, would have to go as first-class mail; and if it weighed a fraction more than seven ounces it would require sixteen cents postage in addition to the registry fee."

"Thank you, Mr. Adams," said counsel for the defense, opening a wooden box and producing a small pair of official post-office scales. "Now, will you please take these scales and this watch and tell the jury how much the watch weighs?"

"Exactly five ounces, sir," replied the witness, after he had carried out these instructions.

"And now please weigh this leather watchcase, and the box it was sent in. What is their combined weight?"

"Two and a half ounces, sir."

"Thank you. So the watch, the leather case, and the box together would weigh seven and a half ounces, and if sent by first-class mail would require sixteen cents postage, and an additional ten cents for registry, would they not?"

"They certainly would."

"And the empty leather case and the box alone would require just six cents in postage?"

"Of course."

"Very good," said the lawyer, with a chuckle. "Now, take a look at this wrapper—the wrapper which was around the package from which my client is alleged to have stolen the watch—and tell the jury how many stamps you find there, Mr. Adams."

"Three two-cent stamps and a ten-cent stamp," announced the witness.

"Consequently the package, when it was handed in at your window for registry could not have contained the watch, could it, Mr. Adams?" demanded Judge Lawrence, looking triumphantly toward the jury.

"It positively could not, sir," replied the postal clerk. "Otherwise when I weighed it I should have noticed the discrepancy in postage."

"Well, for the love of Mike!" muttered Jake Hines, his face turning the color of chalk. "Gee! What a fierce break!"

Fifteen minutes later a taxicab drew up in front of the headquarters of the Samuel J. Coggswell Association, and a young man jumped out, dashed frantically into the clubhouse, and up the stairs.

"Well, Jake?" demanded Boss Coggswell, as the young man burst into the room.

"The whole thing's busted, boss!" gasped Hines, the sweat streaming down his face. "Sheridan's acquitted! We made a bad break not puttin' enough stamps on the package, and they've got Bill Warren and the pawnbroker's clerk on the rack now, tryin' to make 'em squeal."

"Holy smoke!" gasped Coggswell, jumping up from his chair. "That sounds bad, Jake—very bad. Do you suppose those fellows will squeal?"

Hines nodded gloomily. "I'm afraid so, governor. That pawnbroker's clerk is a white-livered rat; it won't take long to break down his nerve; and Bill Warren ain't much to be depended on when his own hide's in danger. I'm afraid we're in bad this time, boss—up against it for fair."

For five minutes Samuel J. Coggswell agitatedly paced the floor. Suddenly he halted and turned to Hines, a queer look on his face.

"Jake," he said, "you're looking bad—very bad, indeed, my boy. You need a change of climate—a little trip for your health. Do you understand?"

"You mean you want me to beat it, governor?"

"Yes, at once! Better start right now to pack your suit case. If you need any money I'll sign a check for any amount you want. The bank isn't closed yet."

Hines nodded gloomily. "Yes, I guess you're right. I'd better go. If those fellers squeal—and I'm pretty sure they will—New York's no place for me just now. But how about yourself, boss? What are you goin' to do?"

"Oh, I'll stay, Jake—stay and face the music," replied Coggswell, a smile of resignation on his face. "As long as you're safe, I don't care much what happens to me."

Hines would have been more touched by this unselfishness on the part of his chief if he had not observed that the latter's ears were wagging furiously while he spoke.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AN INFLUENTIAL FRIEND.

As Jake Hines tremulously informed Boss Coggswell, the jury had brought in a verdict of "Not guilty" in the case of Owen Sheridan. That one little slip on the part of the conspirators—their failure to put on the package sufficient stamps to cover the weight of the watch it was supposed to contain—enabled Judge Lawrence to convince the jurors that his client was the victim of a "frame-up."

In his summing up he showed how the wholesale liquor dealer, William Warren, could easily have deceived the two reputable business men who testified that they had seen the watch placed in the package. He pointed out that both of these witnesses had admitted that during the walk to the post office the package had been in Warren's pocket. How simple for him to have had a duplicate package in the same pocket, and hand it in at the registry window instead of the box which contained the watch.

The jury deliberated less than ten minutes before they acquitted the accused carrier. Later that day the pawnbroker's clerk, after a long and grueling examination, broke down, and confessed that he had committed perjury when he had sworn that Owen had pledged the watch.

Carrier Sheridan had not been in the pawnshop at all that day, he admitted. The watch had been pawned by Bill Warren himself, who had offered him a hundred dollars to swear that Owen had conducted the transaction. As he knew the letter carrier by sight, it had been an easy matter for the pawnbroker's clerk to pick him

out unhesitatingly from a group of twenty other carriers, and thus satisfy the post-office inspectors that he was telling the truth.

This was not the only confession extracted that day. Warren, the wholesale liquor dealer, realizing that he was "in bad," decided to make things easier for himself by "blowing the whole game." He swore that he had done this thing at the request of Jake Hines. There were certain reasons why he could not afford to lose Hines' good will, and when the politician had come to him and asked him to do this favor, he had not dared to refuse.

Carrier Smithers, possessing more nerve than these other conspirators, could not be made to admit that he had placed the pawn ticket in Sheridan's trunk. He preserved his taciturn, defiant air throughout the examination, and came from the ordeal smilingly triumphant.

Judge Lawrence and Owen Sheridan were very well satisfied, however, with the result of their efforts. The latter grasped his client's hand fervently, and said:

"Let me congratulate you, Sheridan. Your own cleverness has saved you from jail and enabled us to turn the tables on our enemies. We wouldn't have stood a ghost of a show if it hadn't been for that happy thought of yours about the stamps on the package.

"And now," he added, a gleam in his keen eyes, "we are going after those rascals hot and heavy."

A responsive gleam in Owen's eyes showed how greatly this idea appealed to him. "Yes," he said confidently, "I guess we've got Boss Coggswell where we want him now. This means the finish of that grafter."

"I'm not quite so sure of that," replied the judge, with a whimsical smile. "Don't forget that friend Samuel is a pretty slippery customer. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he managed to wriggle out of this. I think we'll be able to put Jake Hines behind bars without any trouble, but I'm afraid we're not going to have such an easy task convicting his master—not yet, at least."

And the lawyer proved to be a true prophet as far as Samuel J. Coggswell was concerned. When, later that day, reporters from all the daily papers thronged the clubhouse to interview the boss, they found that gentleman smiling and apparently very much at his ease.

"Mr. Coggswell," a newspaper man said bluntly, "we understand that you are going to be indicted for conspiracy. You are accused of being responsible for a frame-up to send a young letter carrier named Sheridan to prison."

The district leader shook his head deprecatingly. "Nothing to it, boys—nothing to it. The rumor is absolutely without foundation, I assure you. Why should a grand jury seek to indict me? It is preposterous to suppose that I had anything to do with the infamous attempt to railroad young Sheridan. On the contrary, I am very friendly toward the man, and I'm glad that he got off—very glad, indeed."

"But, Mr. Coggswell," the newspaper man insisted, "they have proof that Jake Hines, your confidential man, was the moving spirit in that conspiracy."

"Ah!" exclaimed the politician, with a sad smile. "Poor Jake! Poor Jake! By the way, has anybody seen him lately?"

"No," answered the reporter. "I hear that detectives with a warrant for his arrest have been searching all over town for him in vain. It is understood that he has fled. That is why, Mr. Coggswell, it looks as if——"

"So they can't find Jake, eh?" the boss interrupted, his ears wiggling a fast accompaniment to his words. "It is understood that he has run away? Well, if such is, indeed, the case, it looks as if the rascal really must be guilty. Flight can generally be regarded as a confession of guilt, can't it, boys?"

"Well," said one of the newspaper men boldly, "if Hines is guilty, Mr. Coggswell, how about yourself? Everybody knows that he is your confidential man, and ——"

"He was my confidential man, you mean, sir," corrected Coggswell, with dignity. "I'll admit that Jake has been very close to me. I'll admit that I thought the world of him. But, of course, if he was in any way connected with that dastardly plot to send an innocent man to prison —if it can be proved that he had anything to do with it, Jake Hines and I must part company forever. I wouldn't have such a scoundrel around me. Even if he were my own brother, I would cast him out. It is really a sad case—a very sad case. It only goes to show, boys, to what depths an impetuous young man will sometimes descend when he is in love."

The newspaper men looked at him in amazement. "In love?" one repeated inquiringly.

"Yes. Let me give you fellows a little tip. There is a young lady—Miss Dallas Worthington—a very charming young lady, I have been told. She is employed as a typist in the office of a real-estate man named Walter K. Sammis. If you go and see her, she will probably tell you that Jake Hines has been making love to her. I understand, in fact, that he is madly infatuated with her. Now, Miss Worthington happens to be engaged to Carrier Sheridan. Perhaps you can see now the motive which inspired poor Jake to——"

The reporters waited to hear no more. They departed hurriedly for the real-estate office, eager to interview Dallas and get her to confirm this tip.

Thus it happened that the newspapers next morning, in their accounts of Owen Sheridan's trial and its sensational developments, exonerated Boss Coggswell, and unanimously declared that while at first it had been assumed that the conspiracy to railroad the letter carrier to jail was of a political nature, it had been discovered that rivalry in love was at the bottom of it all—that Jake Hines had been inspired solely by personal motives, and had acted without the knowledge of his master.

"I feared as much," said Judge Lawrence to Owen, pointing with a wry smile to the pile of newspapers on his desk. "Coggswell has managed to get from under by making Jake Hines the goat. The grand jury will take the same view of the matter as the newspapers. We shan't be able to convict that rascal this time."

"But we'll get him on that other charge, anyway—the charge of tampering with your mail, judge," declared Owen confidently. "He can't very well wriggle out of that."

The lawyer shook his head dubiously. "I'm not so sure. Carrier Greene and Tom Hovey have skipped their bail. Of course, Coggswell will keep them liberally supplied with funds, so there isn't much chance of their being caught. And unless they can be brought back and forced to squeal, it will be impossible to implicate the boss."

"But how about my testimony?" protested Owen. "You

are forgetting that I am in a position to prove that Coggswell was behind that plot to tamper with your mail, judge."

Judge Lawrence laughed grimly. "No, I am not forgetting. Your testimony, by itself, wouldn't be worth anything at all, Owen. Sam Coggswell evidently thought that it would. He must have been afraid of you, or he wouldn't have gone to such trouble and risk to have you discredited, unless, of course, he did it merely out of revenge; but if he had consulted a lawyer he would have learned that we couldn't implicate him on your testimony alone."

Seeing the look of disappointment of Sheridan's face, the lawyer laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder, and said:

"Never mind, my boy; we'll get that rascal yet. You can depend upon it that he is mixed up in several corrupt post-office deals, any one of which, if exposed, will land him in jail. And when you're a post-office inspector, Owen, you'll have a chance to look thoroughly into some of those deals."

"When I'm a post-office inspector!" repeated Owen, with a laugh. "I'm afraid there won't be any chance of that happening while Boss Coggswell remains in power. He'll make it his business to see that I——"

"My friend," interrupted Judge Lawrence dryly, "Sam Coggswell isn't the only one who has a pull with the post-office department. As it happens, I have a friend at Washington whose word carries quite some weight in postal affairs. Believing that a man of your cleverness would be a valuable acquisition to the secret-service branch of the department, and feeling absolutely confident that you would come out of your trouble all right, I wrote to this friend of mine the other day in your behalf. This morning I received his answer. When you have read it I think you will agree that in spite of Sam Coggswell's opposition you are going to get the job you want."

He took a letter from his desk, and handed it to Owen. With great astonishment the young man read:

"MY DEAR JUDGE: I have your note. Come and take lunch with me next Thursday, and we will talk the matter over. If your young protégé is as bright and honest as you say, I should like to see him made a post-office inspector."

This letter was written on White House stationery, and bore the signature of the President of the United States.

Three months later Letter Carrier Sheridan became Post-office Inspector Sheridan.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FIRST CASE.

Sheridan was assigned to the New York division of the postal secret service, and, oddly enough, the first case that he was sent to investigate was at the branch at which he had served as carrier.

"Sheridan," said the chief inspector, "run up to Station X Y right away. There's some trouble up there. Go and straighten it out."

Wondering what his trouble could be, and which one of his former comrades was concerned in it, Owen jumped aboard a subway express, and half an hour later stepped into the private office of Superintendent Henderson, of Branch X Y.

Henderson's greeting was flatteringly deferential. No matter how honest a postmaster may be, he likes to have the good will of the special investigators. Owen in his new rôle was, therefore, considered a person of some importance by his former boss.

"How do you do, Mr. Sheridan?" said he. "May I offer you my heartiest congratulations upon your promotion?" He extended his hand somewhat hesitatingly, remembering the bad turn he had once done Owen by peremptorily transferring him from his route.

But Owen did not bear any grudge. Henderson, except for that one act of injustice, had always been fairly decent to him. And, besides, the inspector was too happy over the realization of his ambition to bear ill will toward anybody. He cordially grasped the hand which the superintendent held halfway toward him. "Thank you," he said, in acknowledgment of the congratulations. "I shall never forget the many little kindnesses you showed me when I was connected with this branch."

Henderson looked at him keenly, wondering whether there was anything ironical about this remark; he was relieved to see that there was nothing at all suspicious about the inspector's frank smile.

"I understand that there's some trouble up here," said Owen, getting down to business. "The chief sent me up here to investigate."

The superintendent nodded. "Yes, it's a very mysterious case, Mr. Sheridan. I can give you the details in a few words. A man named Walter K. Sammis—— I beg your pardon?"

Owen had been unable to refrain from an ejaculation of astonishment at the mention of the name of Dallas Worthington's employer. Could it be possible that he had anything to do with this case?

"I didn't mean to interrupt you," he said. "Please go on. You mean Sammis, the real-estate man, I presume?"

"Yes. He came around to this office at five o'clock yesterday evening, accompanied by another man—the Reverend Atkinson Moore. They came to see me with reference to a letter which they had dropped in the street letter box outside Sammis' office—a letter in a pink envelope. Mr. Sammis explained to me that the letter contained a hundred-dollar bill which the clergyman was sending to a poor family in Pennsylvania."

"He was sending a hundred dollars in currency in an unregistered letter?" exclaimed Owen, with some astonishment.

"Yes," answered the superintendnt, with a smile; "the reverend gentleman has great faith evidently in the infallibility of Uncle Sam's post office; but his friend, Mr. Sammis, is not so trustful. After dropping the letter in the box, Mr. Moore went into the real-estate office to visit Sammis, who is a member of his church, and happened to mention sending the money; whereupon the real-estate man told him what a rash thing he had done to send money in that unsafe manner, and insisted that he should try to get the letter back. They came around here to stop the letter and have it registered before it went out. Of course, I consented to this. I told them that the man who attended to that box had not come in with the last collection, and asked them to wait until he arrived."

The superintendent smiled grimly. "And now, here comes the mystery, Mr. Sheridan. When the carrier came

in and we went to look for that letter it wasn't to be found. There was no pink envelope in his bag."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Owen, who had not been in the secret service long enough to conceal his emotions.

"We searched through the contents of the bag four times," Henderson went on. "We examined the bottom of the bag carefully, thinking it might possibly have stuck there; we went to the street letter box to see whether the pink envelope might not have been left behind. Not a trace of it could we find anywhere."

"And Mr. Moore is quite certain that he dropped it in the box?" asked Owen.

"Absolutely positive."

"And quite sure that it was a pink envelope?"

"Yes, he is certain of that."

"Who's the carrier who made the collections, Mr. Henderson?"

"James Andrews."

"Pop Andrews!" exclaimed Owen. "Then that disposes of the theory that the letter was stolen on the way from the street box to the post office. I'm sure that Pop is too honest to have stolen it himself, and too careful to let anybody else take it from his bag. What has Pop to say about the matter, Mr. Henderson?"

"He hasn't given us any explanation. He's all broken up about the matter. The poor fellow realizes that he's placed in a nasty position. Nevertheless, it seems to me that he's holding something back. I mean to say that there's something about his manner that sort of gives me the idea that he knows a little more than he cares to tell about that letter."

"May I see him?" asked Inspector Sheridan.

"Yes; I'll send for him."

Carrier Andrews entered the superintendent's private office looking very worried and upset. He uttered an exclamation of astonishment when he discovered that Sheridan was the inspector assigned to the case.

"Now, Pop," said Owen gently to the veteran postman, "what can you tell me about this pink letter? Any help that you can give me I'll greatly appreciate."

The old man looked at the young inspector pityingly. "Owen—er—I beg your pardon, I mean Mr. Sheridan—I'm mighty sorry that they sent you up to handle this case, because I've decided, after thinking it over, that I'd better tell the whole truth, and I'm afraid it's going to hit you pretty hard."

"Hit *me* hard!" exclaimed Owen, in astonishment.

"Yes, sir. I've kept quiet until now—first, because in order to tell the truth I'll have to confess to having violated the rules, which I hate to do, having been so long in the service; secondly, because I don't like the idea of causing trouble to the young lady."

"The young lady!" Owen couldn't help breaking in.

"Yes. As I say, I've decided that I'd better tell the truth," said Pop Andrews. "I do know something about that letter. There was a pink envelope in the box when I went to collect the mail. I gave it to the young lady who was standing at the box waiting for me. At first I didn't want to give it to her, knowing it was against the rules, but she begged so hard, and finally, when she began to cry, telling me that it meant all the world to her to get that letter back, I decided that I'd take a chance, and I handed her the pink envelope."

"She told you that it was hers, of course, Pop?" said Owen.

"Yes; she said that she'd dropped it in the box only five minutes before, and that it was a letter that would cause a lot of trouble if it was sent, so she wanted it back. I believed her, and I let her have it, not dreaming that it wasn't hers—that she was working a game on me."

"And I suppose you have no idea who this young woman was, have you, Pop?"

Once more the gray-haired carrier looked pityingly at the young inspector. "Yes, Mr. Sheridan, I have. I hate to tell you, knowing what she is to you, but it was the young lady who works in Mr. Sammis' office, Miss Dallas Worthington."

Walking so quickly that his pace was almost a run, Owen Sheridan hurried around to Walter K. Sammis' real-estate office. It was past ten o'clock, and Dallas was usually at her typewriter by nine; but there was no sign of her now. Her employer stood in the outer office, and looked at Owen questioningly.

"Hasn't Miss Worthington got down yet, Mr. Sammis?" the young man asked.

"No, she hasn't, and I can't understand what's keeping her."

Without stopping to say another word, Owen hurried around to Dallas' boarding house. It was ridiculous, of course, to suspect that she could have stolen that letter; but the mystery must be cleared up immediately.

"Where's Miss Worthington?" he inquired of the landlady, who came to the door in response to his ring.

"I couldn't tell you, Mr. Sheridan," the woman answered; "she left here last night."

"Left last night!" repeated Owen blankly.

"Yes; she came in here just before supper time, rushed up to her room, packed her suit case, and hurried out of the house as if a thousand demons were after her."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE PINK ENVELOPE.

For a moment Post-office Inspector Owen Sheridan stood staring stupidly at Dallas Worthington's landlady, appalled by the significance of what the woman had just told him.

"Gone!" he exclaimed dazedly, at last, "and with her suit case. But didn't she say where she was going, Mrs. O'Brien? Didn't she tell you when she'd be back?"

"No, sir; not a word. She rushed out of the house like a creature possessed. In all the while I've known her I've never seen her in such a state. She's usually such a calm, dignified young woman, as well you know, Mr. Sheridan. If it wasn't that she left her trunk behind her, and that she don't impress me as bein' at all that kind of person, I'd be inclined to think that she'd skipped to beat her board bill; she owes me three weeks' board. I've been gettin' nothing but excuses and promises from her lately."

This was another staggerer for Owen. Dallas in need of money! He knew that the girl's position as stenographer in Mr. Sammis' real-estate office did not command a very big salary; but she had never once hinted to Owen that she was not earning enough to pay her expenses.

"Poor little girl," he mused tenderly. "She's evidently been having a hard struggle to get along, and I never guessed it. But, thank goodness, she won't have to

struggle any longer. There's nothing to prevent us from getting married now, and she can throw up that job as soon as she's ready."

He was smiling to himself at the pleasant picture his mind drew of a cozy little flat, with Dallas, trim and dainty, pouring coffee at a breakfast table laid for two, when the strident voice of the boarding-house woman brought him sharply to his senses:

"Why a young woman that's earning twelve dollars a week—which I understand is her salary, Mr. Sheridan—shouldn't be able to keep out of debt when her board bill's only eight, is something that I fail to understand. It isn't as if she was a fancy dresser. She's always neat, of course, but she never wears expensive clothes, and I can't see why she should have to get three weeks behind in her board, when——"

Owen hastily took out his wallet, and withdrew twenty-four dollars.

"When Miss Worthington comes back, you can tell her that her board bill has been paid, without telling her who paid it, Mrs. O'Brien," he said, handing her the money. "And please don't mention anything to anybody about her having been in arrears."

"I won't, sir," the landlady assured him. "It ain't no disgrace, of course, to be hard up; but, at the same time, I know it ain't a subject that people like to have talked about. I'll be very careful not to mention it, Mr. Sheridan."

"I sincerely hope that she'll keep that promise," said Owen to himself, as he left the house. "Until this pink-envelope mystery is cleared up, it would be very awkward to have it become known that Dallas was so financially embarrassed that she couldn't pay her board bill."

Then he smiled grimly, as it occurred to him that the only person from whom, in Dallas' behalf, such knowledge should have been kept was himself. Of what use to request the landlady not to mention the matter to anybody, when he, the inspector in charge of the case, was already in possession of the incriminating information? He was the man who must find out what had become of the missing pink envelope. He was the man who must name the guilty person, and eventually make an arrest in the case. And, now that he knew that Dallas Worthington had suddenly vanished, a few minutes after she got possession of the only pink envelope which the letter box contained, what was he going to do about it?

He asked himself this question uneasily as he walked away from the boarding place. He told himself indignantly that it was preposterous to suppose for a minute that Dallas could be guilty of stealing the missing letter; that she could deliberately have deceived Carrier Andrews in order to get possession of the hundred-dollar bill which the pink envelope contained.

He was angry with himself for even considering the possibility of Dallas' guilt. "A nice way to treat the girl I love—the girl I am going to make my wife!" he muttered. "It would serve me right if she threw me over entirely when she learns that I dared to doubt her. How foolish to suppose that her disappearance can have anything to do with the loss of that letter!"

Yet he knew very well that it was not foolish, from the standpoint of an impartial post-office inspector. He knew very well that, considering all the facts in the case, if it had been any other girl than Dallas Worthington, he would have decided with positiveness that the person to be charged with the crime was the young woman who had accosted Pop Andrews at the street letter box, and pleaded with the old mail collector until he handed her the letter.

He realized that he must do one of two things: He must scoff at Pop Andrews' story, accuse him of having invented that yarn about handing the pink envelope to Dallas, charge the veteran carrier with being the thief, and place him under arrest; or else, accepting the carrier's story as the truth, he must report to his chief that the missing letter had been stolen by a young woman named Dallas Worthington, who had not yet been placed under arrest because she had fled to escape the consequences of her act.

"It's a ticklish proposition," reflected Owen. "I can't very well accuse Dallas, yet I know very well that Pop Andrews is honest, and it would break the old fellow's heart to accuse him of being a thief."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### UNWELCOME DUTIES.

As Sheridan entered the post office, and stepped moodily into the private rooms of the superintendent, Henderson looked at him with an expectant smile. "Well, Mr. Inspector, have you solved the mystery yet?"

"Not quite, Henderson. Is Pop Andrews in? I'd like to have another talk with him."

"Yes; he's upstairs in the swing room, I believe. I'll send for him."

"Now, Pop," said Owen, as the grizzled carrier came into the office, "are you absolutely sure that it was Miss Worthington to whom you handed that pink envelope last night?"

"Yes, sir; I am quite sure."

"You don't think there's any possibility that you could have been mistaken—that it might have been some other young woman who resembled Miss Worthington?" asked Owen.

"No; I'm positive, Mr. Sheridan. I know her well. You know I had that delivery route for six weeks last summer, while Smithers was sick, and I saw her, of course, every day when I called at the real-estate office with the mail, so I couldn't be mistaken."

Owen nodded gloomily. "That's right, Pop; I recall, now, that you had that route while Smithers was laid up. As you say, you ought to know her. Now, I want you to tell me, Pop, exactly what passed between you when she asked for that letter. Give me every word of the conversation as near as you can remember it."

"Very good, sir," said the old man. "Well, to begin at the very beginning, the young lady was pacing up and down in front of the letter box in a very nervous manner, as I came along. When I went to open the box, she touched my arm, and said: 'I just dropped a letter in here, which I'd like to get back. I've changed my mind about sending it.' 'Excuse me, miss,' I said, 'but before you go any further let me tell you that us carriers are not allowed to hand back anything that has been mailed. Its strictly against the rules,' I says. 'The only way you can get your letter is by going around to the post office and seeing the superintendent. He can let you have it if he wants to; the rules give him that right; but I can't.'"

"And what did she say to that?" inquired Owen eagerly.

"She said that she didn't care to go around to see the superintendent; that she didn't think he'd do her the favor, and she began to plead and beg, saying that if I knew how very much it meant to her to get that letter back, she was sure that I wouldn't refuse her."

"Didn't she tell you what was in the letter?" asked Owen. "Surely she must have mentioned something as to the nature of its contents, Pop?"

"No, sir; she didn't. She merely said it was a very important letter, and that it would do a terrible lot of harm if it went through the mail. And she said, also, that she could pick the latter out without giving me any trouble, because it was in a pink envelope, and square-shaped."

"Square-shaped!" repeated Owen, turning eagerly to Superintendent Henderson, who sat listening to this conversation. "Then that goes to prove that——"

"I believe I forgot to mention, Mr. Inspector, that according to Mr. Sammis and his clergyman friend, the letter which they dropped into the box, and which is now missing, was also in a square envelope," interrupted the superintendent.

The look of joyous relief which had come to Owen's face immediately disappeared. "Well, go on, Pop," he said, in a discouraged tone.

"Well, sir, the young lady pleaded so hard that finally, like a weak old fool, I consented to do her the favor. It wasn't until she began to cry that I gave in; I can't bear to see a woman in tears, and I didn't dream for a minute, of course, that there was goin' to be all this trouble about that letter afterward; so I told her I'd take a chance and let her have it."

"And when you handed her the pink envelope, you noticed, of course, the address which was on it," said Owen, clutching at straws. "Are you quite sure, Pop, that it was addressed to a person in Pennsylvania—the same person to whom the clergyman's missing letter was addressed?"

He asked the question fearfully, realizing that Dallas' fate depended upon what answer the old carrier made. If Pop Andrews answered in the affirmative, then there could be no doubt, of course, that the letter which Dallas had asked for and received was the letter which contained the clergyman's hundred-dollar bill.

But the veteran shook his head. "No, I couldn't swear to that, Owen; I couldn't tell you whether it was addressed to the same party or not, because I didn't see the address side at all."

"You didn't see it?" exclaimed Owen incredulously. "You mean to say that you handed her the letter without even looking at it, Pop?"

An exclamation of astonishment came from Superintendent Henderson. He, too, looked at the old man incredulously.

Pop Andrews' air was sheepish. "I must admit that I'm all kinds of a careless fool," he said; "but, you see, she didn't give me a chance to look at that address. As soon as I opened the box and took out its contents she reached for the pink envelope, which was lying on top of the heap, and she said: 'Here it is; thank you very much.' And she grabbed it before I had a chance to object. I was about to tell her that she couldn't have the letter until she had convinced me that it was the right one, but before I could say a word she was hurrying up the street with the pink envelope in her hand bag."

"And you didn't follow her and insist upon her giving it up or letting you examine it?" exclaimed Owen.

"No, sir; I didn't bother. You see, I supposed everything was all right. I thought the young lady acted like that merely because she was excited and nervous. You know how jerky a woman'll act when she's got something on her mind. I put it down to that, and went ahead with my collections, not thinking any more about the matter until I got back here, and was asked to produce the pink envelope containing a hundred-dollar bill, which the parson had dropped into that same letter box."

As the old man finished, he turned anxiously to Owen. "I hope you believe what I've told you? You're not going to place me under arrest, are you, Mr. Sheridan?"

Owen hesitated, but only for a moment. His glance traveled from the veteran's grizzled hair to the gold stars on his coat sleeves—emblems of forty years' faithful service in the department. Then a look of determination came to the young inspector's face.

"No, Pop, I'm not going to arrest you," he said. "Hard as it is to believe, I feel that you've told me the truth, and I can't be so unjust as to make you the scapegoat."

Superintendent Henderson looked at Owen in astonishment. "Excuse me for butting in, Mr. Sheridan," he said, "but being that you're new at this work I take the liberty of reminding you that it's usual in cases of this sort to arrest the carrier. I don't want to make things unpleasant for Pop, of course, but, at the same time, it seems to me that you can't very well let him go free. You see, Mr. Sheridan, he admits that he handed the missing letter to the young woman, and, therefore, innocent though his intentions may have been, in the eyes of the law he's a party to the crime."

"I guess that's right," assented Owen, his face flushing at thus having displayed his greenness. He turned apologetically to Carrier Andrews. "What the superintendent says is undoubtedly so, Pop. I'm sorry to say that I'll have to place you under arrest, after all."

TO BE CONTINUED.

## ONE WAY TO DIE RICH.

A few years ago, a British ship having on board a large consignment of Spanish specie for a house in Rio Janeiro, was wrecked on the Brazilian coast. The captain ordered some of the casks containing the gold to be brought on deck, but it was soon found necessary to take to the boats without any of the treasure.

As the last boat was about to leave, one of the officers went back to make a last tour of the ship. Sitting beside one of the casks with a hatchet in his hand, he found one of the sailors.

"Hurry up!" cried the officer. "We came within an ace of going off without you."

"I'm not going," replied the sailor, giving the cask a hearty whack with the hatchet, bursting it open, and laughing with delight as the coin poured out around him; "I've always wanted to die rich. I've been poor all my life, and this is my first and last chance. Go ahead! I'll stay here with my fortune."

Argue as he might, the officer could not persuade the fellow to leave the gold, with which he played as a child with marbles, and he finally had to leave him to his fate.

# THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

### Robber Spares Nervy Man.

Isaac Pressman, tailor at 5505 Woodland Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, was awakened at four a. m. by the gleam of a flash light on his face.

When he sat up in bed he found the flash light had been switched so as to shine on his trousers hung over the back of a chair. In the shaft of light he saw a hand searching the pockets.

Pressman leaped from bed and grappled with the burglar. In the struggle the burglar seized Pressman's revolver from the bureau and ordered hands up.

"You've got nerve," the intruder said, "so I won't shoot you. But you should have got the gun before you jumped me."

Then he disappeared with the gun and a pocketbook containing fourteen dollars.

### Hen Cares for Little Pigs.

Because a hen, the property of Earl Peck, of Sandersbury, Pa., is not allowed to set on eggs, she has undertaken to mother two little pigs the farmer brought home a few days ago. It's a cute sight to see the hen strutting around with her adopted ones.

### The "Sneeze Wood" Tree.

In South Africa there is the "sneeze-wood" tree, which is so called because one cannot cut it with a saw without sneezing, as the fine dust has exactly the effect of snuff. No insect or worm will touch it; it is very bitter to the taste, and, when placed in water, it sinks.

### Interesting New Inventions.

A typewriter that can be operated by the feet has been invented by a German. It is for the benefit of those who have lost one or both arms in the war.

For testing X-ray apparatus, skeleton hands, made of paper and being about as opaque as real hands, have been invented.

Because some London streets are too narrow for motor omnibuses to be turned around, vehicles are being tried with controlling apparatus at each end.

A recently invented pneumatic boxing glove is intended to protect both user and opponent from harm.

### His Case Puzzles Doctors.

W. H. Hilton, living near Crane, Mo., lost his voice two years ago from the effects of a severe case of whooping cough. The singular feature of Mr. Hilton's affliction is that he can speak audibly to dumb animals on his farm in as clear a voice as he ever could, but can only whisper when he attempts to speak to persons. Mr. Hilton's health is excellent, and his strange affliction has puzzled physicians from many parts of the State. He is sixty-five years old.

### Electrically Groomed Horses.

Vacuum cleaners, which have the usefulness of currycombs, with the additional advantage of suction to draw into a receptacle the dust, scale, and dandruff removed from the animal's coat, have been adopted for grooming the horses of New York City's park department. The cleaner is driven by an electric motor, and is so light as to be easily carried from place to place. For greater convenience, however, they are mounted on hand trucks.

It has been found that besides doing the work in a much more thorough and sanitary manner than is possible with the ordinary currycomb, the cleaners are far more rapid. The men, using the vacuum cleaner, can care for several times the number of horses they formerly could curry in the old way.

### Michigan Farmer is Rival of Burbank.

Hen Stratton, the Luther Burbank of Benzie County, Mich., is conducting a series of interesting experiments with his chewing-gum tree.

Last fall lightning struck three trees in Hen's woods, and when he looked over the damage he had an idea. One of his young maples was split in two, the big spruce next to it was splintered, and the slippery elm, a few feet away, was hewed from top to bottom. Hen pulled the three trees together, bound them tight for twenty feet, and let them grow that way.

He thinks the sap of the sugar maple will flow through the spruce gum and turn out the finest kind of maple-flavored gum. He added the slippery elm to make it softer chewing.

### "Safety-first" Candle.

Candles can easily be fitted with attachments to put out the light at a set time. Mark a candle of the size used and time how long a certain length of it will burn. Then suspend a small metal dome or cap, to which a string is attached directly over the flame, and run the opposite end of the string over nails or through screw eyes, so that it can be tied around the candle such a distance from the flame end that the part between the flame and the string will be consumed in the time desired for the light to burn. When this point is reached, the string slips off the candle and the cap drops on the flame.

### Mule Stops Runaway Auto.

It took a Missouri mule to stop a runaway automobile belonging to Professor W. G. Wesley, of Collinsville, Tenn., which started up mysteriously and ran two blocks to where a mule was hitched to a hind wheel of a country wagon. Seeing the car making for it, the mule turned and kicked the car squarely in the hood, which resulted in damaging the engine so badly that it stopped.

The mule belonged to Jim Sparks, and came from Kansas City.

### "The Campbells Are Coming."

For the first time in history, Scottish bagpipe factories are working night and day, according to word from Glasgow.

It is not only the Scottish regiments that march to the battlefields behind the pipes. English, Irish, and even the Indian regiments have caught the "pipe craze," until now it is estimated that ten thousand pipes are playing "Johnny Cope" every morning in Britain, at sea, or in France.

and the demand for the instrument exceeds the supply. The instruments cost from thirty-five dollars to forty-five dollars.

### Woman Dwarf 106 Years Old

The one-hundred-and-sixth birthday anniversary of Mrs. Jeannette Schwartz, a dwarf three feet high, weighing only twenty pounds, was recently celebrated in the Brooklyn Hebrew Home for the Aged.

Mrs. Schwartz received her guests in bed, where she has been since coming to the home a year ago. Her advanced age and diminutive size have made her the wonder of the home.

She replied with intelligence in German to the many questions put to her, but her memory could not recall anything that happened beyond ten years ago.

### Bees Sting Horse to Death.

While grazing in a pasture, a valuable horse belonging to J. W. Sweeney, of Lancaster, Ky., was attacked by a swarm of bees and so badly stung that he died.

### Chase Kills Dog and Rabbit.

Two greyhounds chased a jack rabbit until it toppled over dead, but the dogs were so exhausted they did not pick it up. A few moments later the dogs also died from overexertion. Ivan Marshall, of Lebanon, Kan., owner of the dogs, buried the three bodies in the same grave.

### Fifty Years a Postman.

Louis Manz, of Milwaukee, Wis., who quit the post-office department a few days ago, was the oldest mail carrier in point of service in the United States, having served fifty years. Mr. Manz, who is eighty years old, may become the center of a movement for pensions for superannuated mail carriers.

Upon the occasion of his retirement, a banquet was given in his honor by his friends. It was attended by many of those to whom he had carried mail.

### Tooter Would Lead Five Bands.

To be the leader of five brass bands is the strenuous and unusual task of Charles Brown, a Junction City, Kan., bandmaster. Evidently he believes with the poet, that music has its power to soothe the savage breast.

### Pink Kitten is a Beauty.

A kitten owned by Miss Mary Swartz, of Point Pleasant, Pa., is one of the oddest freaks of nature ever seen in that section. The kitten is a bright pink in color, and it is a beauty.

### Moon is Powerless to Influence Crops.

"Scientists are now convinced that the moon has no more influence on crops than it has upon the temperature, or the amount of rain, or the winds, or any other weather element," say experts of the Federal Department of Agriculture.

"The growth of plants depends upon the amount of food in the soil and the air that is available for them, and upon temperature, light, and moisture. The moon obviously does not affect the character of the soil in any way; neither does it affect the composition of the atmosphere. The only remaining way in which it could influence plant growth, therefore, is by its light.

"Recent experiments, however, show that full daylight is about six hundred thousand times brighter than full moonlight; yet, when a plant gets one-one-hundredth part of normal daylight, it thrives little better than in absolute darkness. If one-one-hundredth part of normal daylight is thus too little to stimulate a plant, it seems quite certain that a six-hundred-thousandth part cannot have any effect at all. It is, therefore, a mere waste of time to think about the moon in connection with the planting of crops.

"The moon has nothing more to do with this than it has to do with the building of fences, the time for killing hogs or any other of the innumerable things over which it was supposed to exert a strong influence."

### Cat Mothers Young Rabbit.

A young rabbit found by Arthur Keen, who lives east of Gentry, Mo., a few days ago, was taken home and placed in a nest of young kittens of nearly the same size and age as the rabbit. The mother cat quietly adopted the little stranger, seeming to think as much of it as she did of her own offspring. The little rabbit seems perfectly satisfied with its new mother, and is as lively and playful as the kittens.

### Magnet Picks Up Nails.

This device has been invented to take the place of the hardware man's scoop. It is only necessary to thrust the hand magnet into a mass of nails and touch a button, which turns on the electric current. The nails cling to the magnet and may be lifted to the scales or wherever desired. After a little practice in manipulating the magnet, the operator can gauge closely as to the number of pounds of nails he desires to lift. As can be seen, this is easier than trying to pick up a handful or scoopful of eightpenny nails.

### Work for Thirty-five Thousand in Kansas.

A call for thirty-five thousand harvest hands has been sent out by the Kansas free-employment bureau. Last year forty-two thousand harvesters found work in Kansas. The acreage is slightly less than a year ago, but the prospects for an enormous crop are unusually good.

### Find New Name for "Nuts."

"The strenuous life of business men," says an eminent physician, "is causing New Yorkitis. For one insane man in our asylums there are ten outside. New Yorkitis," he says, "is a mild form of insanity. It is caused by irregular working hours, nonhygienic surroundings, and too much rush. Unregulated work isn't the only thing that's the matter with New Yorkers," says the doctor.

"They eat too much. As for exercise, they take practically none. Up to forty, we have decreased the death rate. But what is happening after forty? The death rate is increasing by leaps and bounds. Organic diseases, those affecting the kidneys and the heart, the blood vessels and the nerves, are enormously on the increase."

### New Typewriter Appliance.

The day of the unhandy hand method of pulling or pushing back the typewriter carriage and spacing the paper on the roll at the end of each line is to be ended for some people, for A. W. Wing, a court reporter, of Chicago, Ill., has just secured a patent for a machine

which accomplishes both movements with a slight movement of the foot.

Wing believes his apparatus will add almost as much again efficiency to a typewriter as at present, as the machine will save both time and strength. He has several models working.

### Resolved to Die in Deserted City.

Living only in the memory of a distant past, isolated from the rest of the world, yet living in a city of a thousand homes, sitting idly hour by hour at the front of a small saloon where twenty years ago prosperity and excitement were on every hand, Sam Bolger, former Topeka bartender, later an adventurer, gambler, and Colorado saloon owner, is residing in the deserted mining town of Gillette, Col.

The life of Sam Bolger reads like a romance, tinged with all the vicissitudes of life, livened by the carefree days when gold was more plentiful in Cripple Creek than to-day, shadowed by more sorrows than falls to the lot of the average man.

Several Topeka pioneers may remember him in the days of yore when he served drinks over the bar of a saloon on lower Kansas Avenue, before the amendment was put into effect which placed Kansas in the fore rank of dry States.

A newspaper man and party visited Gillette. They found the town deserted, except by one man, Sam Bolger. He occupied a dilapidated saloon, but had no customers.

An inquisitive nomad put the following question to the old relic:

"Where are the rest of the voters?"

The faded old man did not answer at first, but then he replied: "They are everywhere but here."

He then relapsed into silence, but another Kansan—or, rather, he was a Kansas Cityan—spied a table and a few suspicious-looking bottles within the place. He called the ancient gentleman and together they entered the poorly kept saloon. (Film here deleted by censor.) When the old man came out, some ten minutes later, he was in a more talkative mood.

"I hear that you fellows are from Kansas," he said, "but you don't know Kansas as I knew it. The men who were young then are now in their dotage. When I lived in Topeka, it was a wide-open town, and it was my business to furnish beer and whiskies to its progressive citizens."

The man—he said his name was Sam Bolger—again fell into a moody silence. Then he resumed his talk.

"I was a fool for ever leaving Topeka. It was in 1880, not long after the prohibition amendment went into effect. I had lost my job. I had no money. So I just naturally drifted West, and for the next ten years I roamed around California, New Mexico, Arizona, and old Mexico. But it was in eighteen-ninety that I came to Cripple Creek. The first real strike had been made. With thousands of others I fell a victim to my ambition to be rich. Out of all those who went to Cripple Creek in those years, only a few remain to-day who have wealth.

"I just naturally had no luck. I sweated my life away in the mines. I gambled and drank away my wages in Cripple Creek. There never was a city yet that could equal it. Money flowed like water. I believe it was the wickedest spot on the map.

"I was in the great Cripple Creek fire of eighteen-ninety-six. By that time I was part owner of a small saloon. The fire destroyed my place, and I was broke again.

"Then I heard rumors of Gillette. The town became a city in a night. The rush of men here at that time was heavy. Being one of the first on the ground, I started a saloon in a shack and a boarding house in a tent. Then I leased the upstairs of a building and owned the first dance hall here. For several months Gillette was fast becoming the center of the Cripple Creek region. Then the gold gave out. It was shallow. People left here in a single night. Many did not take even the precaution of shutting their doors. Gillette started like a whirlwind, and in a like manner it became deserted.

"Only a few of us remained, firm in the belief that the country was plentiful in gold. My saloon business was ruined, yet I kept it up, and still have it to-day. Gradually my friends left Gillette, but I remained, and have lived in solitary grandeur since nineteen hundred and eight, when the last of my family moved away.

"Why don't I leave, you ask? Why should I? I have nothing especially to live for. I have formed an attachment to Gillette. I will die here. I am emperor of the place. My word is law, having no one to dispute it."

The visitors soon after this resumed their journey to Cripple Creek, seven miles away. An air of depression filled each and every one of them. They began to realize what Carthage looked like after the carnage of the Romans. As they turned off the main "drag" into a side street and thence to the main road, the newspaper man looked back. Sam Bolger, a pathetic figure to say the least, was still sitting where he had been left.

### The Strange Rites of the "Voodoo Queen."

While voodooism—into the realm of which hideous and grotesque cult one cannot go far without encountering the snake dancer, medicine faker, charm vender, witchcraft queen, and the like—is becoming a matter of "ancient history" in the South, still, one is bound to stumble onto signs of it occasionally, and if one only follows the right trail, he may come upon a scene that will readily convince him that the old-time practices of some superstitious blacks are not dead or soundly slumbering.

The annual outbreaks—and then some—of aged Marie Lavoe, known in Louisiana as the "Voodoo Queen," who was born in the Kongo and was brought to that State in the slavery days, only go to prove that her followers—and these are not all confined to the blacks—are just as eager to take part in her mysterious séances and wilder orgies as they were when she, as a young girl and stately specimen of the African queen, first introduced her startling exhibitions of conjuring and sorcery.

Even now, with the annual return of St. John's Day, this voodoo queen is said to fall from her throne of Christian grace and to plunge again into all the strange practices that in past years won for her a following that has never been outnumbered by any of her rivals, male or female, throughout the South, the only section of the country where such practices are known, although in the large cities of the North charm sellers and voodoo doctors can always be found, if the right negro can be secured to act as guide through the "black belt."

If one would witness some wild dances and still wilder orgies, then one should hie away to Lake St. John, on St. John's Day, and quietly trail the small bands of happy, smiling black folks to the charming oval clearing where

the "festivities" are to take place. Here the spectator will see a terpsichorean divertisement that might well be called "the dance of wild abandon," inasmuch as the dancers appear to have abandoned about all of their covering that the law will allow.

One has but to watch the contortions to discern the origin of many of the movements of fashionable dances as adopted by the society circles of "white folks" to-day. As to the music, one hears the same syncopated measures that lure our white brothers and sisters into the gilded tango palaces of the metropolis.

The scene is startling, if not inspiring. On a mat of "latanier"—scrub palm—sits the voodoo queen. In front of her is a charcoal brazier, a bowl containing milk, a small cage in which are white mice, and in a round basket rests the coiled, live snake that next to the sorceress is the most important property item of the weird scenes that are about to be enacted. While the aged queen is supposed to be a sorceress, judging from her equipment, she is a "caplata" to her worshipers and supporters.

Soon is heard the syncopated strum of the banjos, then the low minor chant of those seated about the charmed circle. One by one the male dancers divest themselves of their superfluous clothing, females the while making the same preparations. The queen liberates the half-starved snake and holds a tiny, frightened mouse before its glistening eyes. The snake darts forth its head and swallows the mouse with a single gulp. This is repeated until the snake has been fed three mice. As the snake bolts each morsel of living food, the queen throws some red-flash powder on the brazier, and for a moment the whole circle is lost in a sweetly perfumed cloud of vapor, which gradually rises and floats away.

When the dancing begins, the faces of the participants all wear a serious look, very much like that seen on faces of a bunch of college athletes about to engage in a hundred or four-hundred-yard sprint. The wild frenzy of the thing is to come later. It will be noticed that the dancers' near-nude bodies are decorated with neck circlets of animal teeth—a custom probably adopted from the North American Indians—gayly colored chicken feathers, rabbits' feet, curious medallions gathered from all parts of the world, but of small intrinsic value, perhaps, although some of the huge ear and nose rings worn by both sexes undoubtedly have been handed down the family line by native Africans.

Gradually the dancers work themselves into the real spirit of the grotesque celebration. They circle about their queen in pairs and singly, and their body contortions soon begin to equal those of the Indians of the Far West when engaged in a similar pastime. The music becomes wilder, the shouts of the nonparticipants become louder, and the dancers begin to puff and blow and grunt strange sounds and exclamations, much like so many blacks playing at craps. Their queen, the while, is not idle. She continues to cast the varicolored flash powders into the fire, and many times the dancers are lost in the misty clouds that the brazier throws off. The dance continues until the participants are completely exhausted and fall with fixed eyes and frothing mouths to the ground, where they gradually recover and then make way for a new "set."

Following the custom established when the thrifty Marie first established her reptilian fandango, each dancer must pay to her three pieces of silver of different denominations. In the early days of her reign this meant a three-cent piece, a dime, and a quarter, but if her patron hasn't a three-cent piece, which is now generally the case, he must pay a dime, a quarter, and a half—eighty-five cents in the total. In return for this presentation, the patron may receive a prettily mounted rabbit's foot, guaranteed to have been killed in a graveyard at midnight, a conjure bag warranted to keep off bad spirits, or his pick from a variety of other "charms" that the chooser firmly believes will carry him safely through to the time when St. John's Day shall have again rolled around.

### Peace at Last in "Bloody Breathitt."

"Dock" Smith, one of the alleged assassins of Ed Callahan, recently pleaded guilty before the court in Winchester, Ky., and was sentenced to a life term in the penitentiary, and it is believed that the passing of sentence on Smith will be the finis to the long-continued feudal warfare which caused the press of the nation to confer the title of "Bloody Breathitt" on the county which produced Jim Hargis and Ed Callahan.

With the deaths of Hargis and Callahan, and the conviction of several of those alleged to have been responsible for the plot which ended Callahan's life, the old feudal spirit was practically wiped out in Jackson and Breathitt Counties, and that section is to-day regarded as having the brightest prospects of any section of the State.

Wealthy Eastern syndicates have invaded Breathitt and adjoining counties and invested heavily in the coal and timber lands of the section, while at the time James B. Marcum was assassinated and for several years subsequent to that tragedy, financial concerns of New York, Philadelphia, and other Eastern cities declined to invest any capital in this troubled district.

Twelve years ago, in Breathitt County, was fired a shot that meant little at the time to those responsible for it, but which in reality meant more for the future of eastern Kentucky than any event of the past half century, for it sounded the death knell of the famous and deadly Hargis-Cockrill feud. It was the shot that killed James B. Marcum as he stood in the front door of the bullet-riddled courthouse at Jackson, and while Marcum was only one of the many who opposed the leaders of the old Hargis-Callahan factions and had gone the same route, by the assassin's bullet, his death aroused the people of the State to action, and from that moment the law camped on the trail of those believed to be guilty of procuring Marcum's death.

Marcum walked into the trap laid for him while those later charged with having laid it were interested spectators, they occupying easy-chairs in the doorway of the Hargis store just across the street. Among those who witnessed the assassination were Jim Hargis and Ed Callahan, county judge and high sheriff, respectively, of Breathitt County; while the other actors in the drama were Curtis Jett, nephew of Hargis, and Tom White, henchman of the Hargis-Callahan clan. These two, according to a subsequent confession by Jett, carried out a plot arranged by Hargis and Callahan to kill Marcum, and as the latter started to enter the door of the courthouse, a shot rang out and he fell mortally wounded.

The assassination of Marcum, following so closely upon the deaths of others in a similar manner, including Jim Cockrill, eldest of the Cockrill brothers, and Doctor B. D. Cox, legal guardian of the infant Cockrill heirs, created

a clamor for justice in Breathitt County, heretofore unknowa in this section. So strong was the pressure brought to bear that before nightfall the governor of the State had ordered a company of militia to Jackson, and martial law was declared the following morning.

This resulted in the calling of a special grand jury, and two weeks later indictments were returned against Jett and White, charging them with the murder of Marcum. They were later convicted and sentenced to a life term in the penitentiary, and both are now paying the penalty behind the prison walls at Frankfort. The case was tried in Cynthiana, having been sent to Harrison County on a change of venue from Breathitt County. Subsequently both men were tried and found guilty of the assassination of Jim Cockrill and given the same sentence as in the Marcum murder.

Through the confession later obtained by the Commonwealth from Mose Feltner and others of the alleged Hargis-Callahan faction, indictments were returned against Jim and Alex Hargis, Ed Callahan, and B. Fult French, charging them with conspiracy to bring about the death of Marcum, Cockrill, and Doctor Cox.

For seven years the four alleged conspirators faced legal death in criminal proceedings as a result of the indictments against them, and while they were subsequently acquitted by juries in Lexington, Beattyville, and Sandy Hook, to which places the cases were sent on a change of venue from Breathitt County, Alex Hargis is the only one of the quartet now living.

Jim Hargis was slain by his own son, Beach Hargis, in the Hargis store in Jackson, and Callahan was slain in his store at Crockettsville, twenty miles from Jackson, three years ago.

B. Fult French was the last one of the alleged conspirators to die, and while he was always considered by many as the real leader of the plots which resulted in many of the anti-Hargis faction passing to the great beyond, he died a peaceful death, last winter, at his home in Winchester. It was to this place that French removed from Hazard after the extermination of the French-Eversole feud in Perry County.

The first of the many legal battles resulting from the death of James B. Marcum was waged here in Winchester the year following his death, his widow, Arbellah Marcum, choosing this city in which to file her claims for one hundred thousand dollars damages because French, one of the alleged conspirators, was a resident of this city. It was an easy matter to get services on the other three alleged conspirators in Clark county, as they had to pass through Winchester three or four times a week going to and from Lexington and Jackson.

The trial lasted five weeks and was, perhaps, the most sensational civil proceeding ever fought in Kentucky. Mrs. Marcum was awarded a judgment against Jim Hargis and Ed Callahan for eight thousand dollars damages, but the judgment was the smallest part of the expense to the defendants, as it cost them thousands of dollars to bring hundreds of witnesses from various parts of the mountains and keep them in Winchester for weeks.

Even with the conclusion of the Marcum suit the legal troubles of the Hargises, Callahan, and French had just begun, and for a period of seven years they were before the courts, either to defend themselves or some of their alleged henchmen, and while neither of the four alleged leaders were ever convicted, their large fortunes and once powerful influence had waned when their legal battles were over.

At the time Jim Hargis was first accused of procuring assassins to kill Marcum, he was the Tenth District Committeeman of the State General Committee of his party, and continued to hold that office until public sentiment forced him out, but when he was killed by his own son, he had lost the political prestige of the leaders who for years stood by him, and he died virtually an obscure resident of Jackson, rarely heard of outside the confines of Breathitt County.

Following the death of Hargis, it was generally believed the old feud had died with its leader, but to those who were opposed to the Hargis faction, Callahan loomed up as the leader of the faction, and every few weeks the old feudal spirit would begin to boil, and this continued until Callahan became the victim of an assassin.

### Parting Shot Opens Gusher.

An oil well, which it is believed will be in the five-thousand-barrel class and will cause the opening of an extension of the famous Cushing field, near Muskogee, Okla., was started to flowing by a twenty-seven quart shot of nitroglycerin made as a parting slap by the owners, who thought the well was worthless.

This well was sunk in the sand in the edge of the Oilton oil pool. It showed no signs of being productive, and there were no productive wells around it. The owners were about to abandon it, but decided to try one more shot of nitroglycerin. Then the oil spouted all over the lease.

### Aged Ship, *Success*, is Safe in Oakland.

On April 14, 1912, an old, storm-beaten, odd-looking, three-masted sailing ship—the oldest vessel afloat—set out from Lancaster, England, and dropping away from Glasson dock, veteran of all piers, seized the wind in her teeth and sped away on a voyage across the western ocean. At different times in her career the old barkentine *Success*, for such is her name, had been a full-riggd merchantman, a convict transport ship, and a despised prison hulk, but just what she is to-day can be ascertained by all who care to go down to the harbor at Oakland, Cal., and devote an hour or so to an inspection of the age-old craft which has just arrived here.

High of stern—almost a galleon in lines—bluffy, "apple-bowed," with an out-of-date figurehead sprawling beneath a skyward bowsprit, she sailed, alone of her kind, an anachronism, a curiosity, a craft as out of place among modern hulls, her foremast hands declared, "as an alligator ashore."

And that was why she sailed uninsured, for Lloyd's—that gamest of all maritime-insurance companies, in whose rooms a gamble will be taken even upon a ship whose skipper "cracks on sail into the Day of Judgment"—had refused her as a risk.

She had been denied British clearance, too, and her only papers were a board-of-health certificate, countersigned by the American consul in her port of departure.

Before her company was filled, a score of captains had thrown up their sea-calloused hands in holy horror when offered the master's billet aboard her, and two crews had deserted before her forefoot could bruise the ocean swells. And even now the old craft is short-manned.

The date first set for the sailing of the *Success* from the port on the River Lune saw the *Titanic* clear South-

ampton upon her memorable and tragic maiden voyage. The old barkentine, however, was delayed by an inability to fill her crew.

"If I hadn't known the sort of stuff that the old girl was built of, I'd have been as skeptical of her chances as the rest," Captain D. H. Smith, her owner, admits. "As vessels go nowadays, she isn't any giant. She is only one hundred and thirty-five feet over all, with a beam of twenty-nine feet, and registered at five hundred and eighty-nine tons. And then consider her age and history.

"She was built of teak throughout—what they used to call 'black ship'—and that's why I have such faith in her, even though she was battered up some in her early youth by the Indian Ocean pirates, and after she fell from caste was moored for so many years as a prison hulk.

"But she made the thousands of miles between Australia and England under her own sail, and then I determined to bring her to the United States."

The *Success*, all sail set to catch the last of the easterly winds she had counted on to carry her across the north Atlantic in forty-six days, left Lancaster with fair weather. She was provisioned for fifty days and carried eighteen thousand gallons of water.

Cordage humming, she stood bravely on the out course, and when she was ten hours beyond sight of land, her wireless operator, Gallagher, sat at a little petrol outfit which had been installed aboard her, sending the last good-bys of the little ship's company of nineteen over the evening sea.

Crook Haven, the great Irish station, was taking his messages, the *Success*, with her call of "I. D. B.," having been given right of way over all other craft. Time and time again other ships tried to cut in, but Crook Haven "turned them out" until Gallagher finished.

Then Gallagher, with his earpieces still on, heard the message which he had shut out come spluttering out of the night. It had been relayed from the *Carpathia*. She was picking up the *Titanic* survivors.

Upon the old barkentine the news of the disaster fell like a thunderclap, and the fear of death took each of them by the throat.

"What chance have we," they asked, "with nothing but a century-old bottom between us and losin' the numbers of our mess?"

And it was not cowardice, either. There was not a man for'ard on the *Success* but who would cheerfully take every chance that comes in a sailor's twenty-four-hour day.

There came a time when the *Success* was sixty days from port and apparently far out of her course. Consequently every time their puny wireless would sputter into the night in a vain attempt to give their location to the ships which were looking for her, the crew, spirit broken and diseased, would jump to the conclusion that their captain was sending the "S. O. S." call for aid, and a strong hand was needed to drive them to the back-breaking task when both watches were required on deck constantly to tack her, and to wear her when the proximity of a great iceberg would not permit them to tack.

When they were twelve days out, four hundred miles due east of Boston, trouble broke out among the crew. Five of the Liverpool bullies grew unruly and demanded that the *Success* be headed for Halifax, which lay a bit over four hundred miles west and about one hundred and fifty miles north of their then position. That same night, while asleep in their bunks, they were made prisoners and were kept locked up until Boston was reached.

The famous old hulk finally dropped anchor off of East Boston flats, thus closing one of the most remarkable voyages in recent years. The five malcontents, and one other who had made trouble for the captain, were sent back to their native countries for punishment. From Boston she went to New York, Baltimore, Washington, and Philadelphia prior to her sailing for San Francisco.

She will remain in Oakland for a brief period only while she is being fitted out for her voyage to British Columbia, whence she will sail direct to Melbourne, her home port. She will never return from the latter port, as she will then have completed a tour of the world.

### Oklahoma Will Honor First White Settlers.

Citizens of Salina, Okla., are making an effort to raise funds with which to erect a monument in Salina marking the site of the first white settlement in what is now Oklahoma.

An organization known as the Choteau Monument Association has been formed in Salina, and its object is to assemble funds or to coöperate with others in raising funds with which to erect the monument.

The Daughters of the American Revolution and the Oklahoma Historical Association may be appealed to for financial aid, and the suggestion has been made that St. Louis, Mo., where the Choteau family has lived since the founding of that city, be asked to aid in marking the spot.

Professor Joseph B. Thoburn, of the University of Oklahoma, State ethnologist, gives the following account of the establishment of the trading post at Salina:

"It is not generally known in Oklahoma that Salina is the site of the first white settlement in Oklahoma—at least of the first of which anything is known. It was nearly one hundred and twenty years ago, or, to be exact, in 1796, that a trading post was established here by the Choteaus of St. Louis. The Choteau brothers were mere lads when they were brought to St. Louis at the time of the first settlement in 1764. They had grown up in the Indian trade, and for many years they had a practical monopoly of that of the Osage tribe, the members of which were several times as numerous as they are now.

"In 1795 Manuel Lisa, a creole Spaniard, secured from the Spanish governor general of the province of Louisiana, at New Orleans, an exclusive concession or monopoly of trading with the Indians of the valley of the Missouri and those of all of its tributaries.

"As the Osage Indians spent most of their time in the valley of the Osage River, and as the Osage never was a tributary of the Missouri, it followed that the Choteaus would lose the lucrative business which they had built up among the Osages. Moreover, there was nothing to prevent the Choteaus from trading with the Osages at any place outside of the watershed of the Missouri.

"Accordingly, the members of the enterprising firm busied themselves in inducing a large number of Osages to move over and settle in the valleys of the Neosho—or Grand—and Verdigris Rivers, in southern Kansas and northern Oklahoma. The establishment of the trading post in the valley of the Grand River, in Mayes County, on the present site of the town of Salina, followed shortly afterward."

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